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PENGUIN CLASSICS

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

The Complete Essays

Translated by M. A. SCREECH

Michel de Montaigne, *Essays of Montaigne, vol. 3* [1580]

Edition used:

Essays of Montaigne, vol. 3, trans. Charles Cotton, revised by William Carew Hazlett (New York: Edwin C. Hill, 1910).

- Author: Michel de Montaigne
- Translator: Charles Cotton
- Editor: William Carew Hazlett

About this title:

Volume 3 of a 10 volume collection of Montaigne's famous essays in the 17th century English translation by Charles Cotton.

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AN ESSAY BY

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

ILLVSTRATED

EDWIN C. HILL

NEW YORK.

EMERSON EDITION

TEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY COPIES HAVE BEEN PRINTED
NUMBER

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ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

OF SOLITUDE

LET US pretermit that long comparison betwixt the active and the solitary life; and as for the fine sayings with which ambition and avarice palliate their vices, that we are not born for ourselves but for the public, let us boldly appeal to those who are in public affairs; let them lay their hands upon their hearts, and then say whether, on the contrary, they do not rather aspire to titles and offices and that tumult of the world to make their private advantage at the public expense. The corrupt ways by which in this our time they arrive at the height to which their ambitions aspire, manifestly enough declares that their ends cannot be very good. Let us tell ambition that it is she herself who gives us a taste of solitude; for what does she so much avoid as society? What does she so much seek as elbow-room? A man may do well or ill everywhere; but if what Bias says be true, that the greatest part is the worse part, or what the Preacher says: there is not one good of a thousand:—

> *"Good men forsooth are scarce: there are hardly as many as there are gates of Thebes or mouths of the rich Nile,"*

the contagion is very dangerous in the crowd. A man must either imitate the vicious or hate them: both are dangerous things, either to resemble them because they are many or to hate many because they are unresembling to ourselves. Merchants who go to sea are in the right when they are cautious that those who embark with them in the same bottom be neither dissolute blasphemers nor vicious other ways, looking upon such society as unfortunate. And therefore it was that Bias pleasantly said to some, who being with him in a dangerous storm implored the assistance of the gods: "Peace, speak softly," said he, "that they may not know you are here in my company." And of more pressing example, Albuquerque, viceroy in the Indies for Emmanuel, king of Portugal, in an extreme peril of shipwreck, took a young boy upon his shoulders, for this only end that, in the society of their common danger his innocence might serve to protect him, and to recommend him to the divine favor, that they might get safe to shore. 'Tis not that a wise man may not live everywhere content, and be alone in the very crowd of a palace; but if it be left to his own choice, the schoolman will tell you that he should fly the very sight of the crowd: he will endure it if need be; but if it be referred to him, he will choose to be

alone. He cannot think himself sufficiently rid of vice, if he must yet contend with it in other men. Charondas punished those as evil men who were convicted of keeping ill company. There is nothing so unsociable and sociable as man, the one by his vice, the other by his nature. And Antisthenes, in my opinion, did not give him a satisfactory answer, who reproached him with frequenting ill company, by saying that the physicians lived well enough amongst the sick: for if they contribute to the health of the sick, no doubt but by the contagion, continual sight of, and familiarity with diseases, they must of necessity impair their own.

Now the end, I take it, is all one, to live at more leisure and at one's ease: but men do not always take the right way. They often think they have totally taken leave of all business, when they have only exchanged one employment for another: there is little less trouble in governing a private family than a whole kingdom. Wherever the mind is perplexed, it is in an entire disorder, and domestic employments are not less troublesome for being less important. Moreover, for having shaken off the court and the exchange, we have not taken leave of the principal vexations of life:—

"Reason and prudence, not a place with a commanding view of the great ocean, banish care;"

ambition, avarice, irresolution, fear, and inordinate desires, do not leave us because we forsake our native country:—

"Black care sits behind the horseman;"

they often follow us even to cloisters and philosophical schools; nor deserts, nor caves, hair-shirts, nor fasts, can disengage us from them:—

"The fatal shaft adheres to the side."

One telling Socrates that such a one was nothing improved by his travels: "I very well believe it," said he, "for he took himself along with him:"—

"Why do we seek climates warmed by another sun? Who, an exile from his country, also flees from himself?"

If a man do not first discharge both himself and his mind of the burden with which he finds himself oppressed, motion will but make it press the harder and sit the heavier, as the lading of a ship is of less encumbrance when fast and bestowed in a settled posture. You do a sick man more harm than good in removing him from place to place; you fix and establish the disease by motion, as stakes sink deeper and more firmly into the earth by being moved up and down in the place where they are designed to stand.

Therefore, it is not enough to get remote from the public; ’tis not enough to shift the soil only; a man must flee from the popular conditions that have taken possession of his soul, he must sequester and come again to himself: —

> *“You say, perhaps, you have broken your chains: the dog who after long efforts has broken his cord, still in his flight drags a heavy portion of it after him.”*

We still carry our fetters along with us. ’Tis not an absolute liberty; we yet cast back a look upon what we have left behind us; the fancy is still full of it:—

> *“But unless the mind is purified, what internal combats and dangers must we incur in spite of all our efforts! How many bitter anxieties, how many terrors, follow upon unregulated passion! What destruction befalls us from pride, lust, petulant anger! What evils arise from luxury and sloth!”*

Our disease lies in the mind, which cannot escape from itself;

> *“In culpa est animus, qui se non effugit unquam,”*

and therefore is to be called home and confined within itself: that is the true solitude, and that may be enjoyed even in populous cities and the courts of kings, though more commodiously apart.

Now, since we will attempt to live alone, and to waive all manner of conversation amongst men, let us so order it that our content may depend wholly upon ourselves; let us dissolve all obligations that ally us to others; let us obtain this from ourselves, that we may live alone in good earnest, and live at our ease too.

Stilpo having escaped from the burning of his town, where he lost wife, children, and goods, Demetrius Poliorcetes seeing him, in so great a ruin of his country, appear with an undisturbed countenance, asked him if he had received no loss! To which he made answer, No; and that, thank God, nothing was lost of his. This also was the meaning of the philosopher Antisthenes, when he pleasantly said, that “men should furnish themselves with such things as would float, and might with the owner escape the storm;” and certainly a wise man never loses anything if he have himself. When the city of Nola was ruined by the barbarians, Paulinus, who was bishop of that place, having there lost all he had, himself a prisoner, prayed after this manner: “O Lord, defend me from being sensible of this loss; for Thou knowest they have yet touched nothing of that which is mine.” The

riches that made him rich and the goods that made him good, were still kept entire. This it is to make choice of treasures that can secure themselves from plunder and violence, and to hide them in such a place into which no one can enter and that is not to be betrayed by any but ourselves. Wives, children, and goods must be had, and especially health, by him that can get it; but we are not so to set our hearts upon them that our happiness must have its dependence upon them; we must reserve a backshop, wholly our own and entirely free, wherein to settle our true liberty, our principal solitude and retreat. And in this we must for the most part entertain ourselves with ourselves, and so privately that no exotic knowledge or communication be admitted there; there to laugh and to talk, as if without wife, children, goods, train, or attendance, to the end that when it shall so fall out that we must lose any or all of these, it may be no new thing to be without them. We have a mind pliable in itself, that will be company; that has wherewithal to attack and to defend, to receive and to give: let us not then fear in this solitude to languish under an uncomfortable vacuity:—

"In solitude, be a multitude to thyself."

Virtue is satisfied with herself, without discipline, without words, without effects. In our ordinary actions there is not one of a thousand that concerns ourselves. He that thou seest scrambling up the ruins of that wall, furious and transported, against whom so many harquebuss-shots are levelled; and that other all over scars, pale, and fainting with hunger, and yet resolved rather to die than to open the gates to him; dost thou think that these men are there upon their own account? No; peradventure in the behalf of one whom they never saw and who never concerns himself for their pains and danger, but lies wallowing the while in sloth and pleasure: this other slavering, blear-eyed, slovenly fellow, that thou seest come out of his study after midnight, dost thou think he has been tumbling over books to learn how to become a better man, wiser, and more content? No such matter; he will there end his days, but he will teach posterity the measure of Plautus' verses and the true orthography of a Latin word. Who is it that does not voluntarily exchange his health, his repose, and his very life for reputation and glory, the most useless, frivolous, and false coin that passes current amongst us? Our own death does not sufficiently terrify and trouble us; let us, moreover, charge ourselves with those of our wives, children, and family: our own affairs do not afford us anxiety enough; let us undertake

those of our neighbors and friends, still more to break our brains and torment us:—

"Ah! can any man conceive in his mind or realize what is dearer than he is to himself?"

Solitude seems to me to wear the best favor in such as have already employed their most active and flourishing age in the world's service, after the example of Thales. We have lived enough for others; let us at least live out the small remnant of life for ourselves; let us now call in our thoughts and intentions to ourselves, and to our own ease and repose. 'Tis no light thing to make a sure retreat; it will be enough for us to do without mixing other enterprises. Since God gives us leisure to order our removal, let us make ready, truss our baggage, take leave betimes of the company, and disentangle ourselves from those violent importunities that engage us elsewhere and separate us from ourselves.

We must break the knot of our obligations, how strong soever, and hereafter love this or that, but espouse nothing but ourselves: that is to say, let the remainder be our own, but not so joined and so close as not to be forced away without flaying us or tearing out part of our whole. The greatest thing in the world is for a man to know that he is his own. 'Tis time to wean ourselves from society when we can no longer add anything to it; he who is not in a condition to lend must forbid himself to borrow. Our forces begin to fail us; let us call them in and concentrate them in and for ourselves. He that can cast off within himself and resolve the offices of friendship and company, let him do it. In this decay of nature which renders him useless, burdensome, and importunate to others, let him take care not to be useless, burdensome, and importunate to himself. Let him soothe and caress himself, and above all things be sure to govern himself with reverence to his reason and conscience to that degree as to be ashamed to make a false step in their presence:—

"For 'tis rare that men have respect and reverence enough for themselves."

Socrates says that boys are to cause themselves to be instructed, men to exercise themselves in well-doing, and old men to retire from all civil and military employments, living at their own discretion, without the obligation to any office. There are some complexions more proper for these precepts of retirement than others. Such as are of a soft and dull apprehension, and of a tender will and affection, not readily to be subdued

or employed, whereof I am one, both by natural condition and by reflection, will sooner incline to this advice than active and busy souls, which embrace all, engage in all, are hot upon everything, which offer, present, and give themselves up to every occasion. We are to use these accidental and extraneous commodities, so far as they are pleasant to us, but by no means to lay our principal foundation there; ’tis no true one; neither nature nor reason allows it so to be. Why therefore should we, contrary to their laws, enslave our own contentment to the power of another? To anticipate also the accidents of fortune, to deprive ourselves of the conveniences we have in our own power, as several have done upon the account of devotion, and some philosophers by reasoning; to be one’s own servant, to lie hard, to put out our own eyes, to throw our wealth into the river, to go in search of grief; these, by the misery of this life, aiming at bliss in another; those by laying themselves low to avoid the danger of falling: all such are acts of an excessive virtue. The stoutest and most resolute natures render even their seclusion glorious and exemplary:—

> *“When means are deficient, I laud a safe and humble condition, content with little: but when things grow better and more easy, I all the same say that you alone are wise and live well, whose invested money is visible in beautiful villas.”*

A great deal less would serve my turn well enough. ’Tis enough for me, under fortune’s favor, to prepare myself for her disgrace, and, being at my ease, to represent to myself, as far as my imagination can stretch, the ill to come; as we do at jousts and tiltings, where we counterfeit war in the greatest calm of peace. I do not think Arcesilaus the philosopher the less temperate and virtuous for knowing that he made use of gold and silver vessels, when the condition of his fortune allowed him so to do; I have indeed a better opinion of him than if he had denied himself what he used with liberality and moderation. I see the utmost limits of natural necessity: and considering a poor man begging at my door, ofttimes more jocund and more healthy than I myself am, I put myself into his place, and attempt to dress my mind after his mode; and running, in like manner, over other examples, though I fancy death, poverty, contempt, and sickness treading on my heels, I easily resolve not to be affrighted, forasmuch as a less than I takes them with so much patience; and am not willing to believe that a less understanding can do more than a greater, or that the effects of precept cannot arrive to as great a height as those of custom. And knowing of how

uncertain duration these accidental conveniences are, I never forget, in the height of all my enjoyments, to make it my chiefest prayer to Almighty God, that He will please to render me content with myself and the condition wherein I am. I see young men very gay and frolic, who nevertheless keep a mass of pills in their trunk at home, to take when they've got a cold, which they fear so much the less, because they think they have remedy at hand. Every one should do in like manner, and, moreover, if they find themselves subject to some more violent disease, should furnish themselves with such medicines as may numb and stupefy the part.

The employment a man should choose for such a life ought neither to be a laborious nor an unpleasing one; otherwise 'tis to no purpose at all to be retired. And this depends upon every one's liking and humor. Mine has no manner of complacency for husbandry, and such as love it ought to apply themselves to it with moderation:—

"And I endeavor to make circumstances subject to me, and not me subject to circumstances."

Husbandry is otherwise a very servile employment, as Sallust calls it; though some parts of it are more excusable than the rest, as the care of gardens, which Xenophon attributes to Cyrus; and a mean may be found out betwixt the sordid and low application, so full of perpetual solicitude, which is seen in men who make it their entire business and study, and the stupid and extreme negligence, letting all things go at random which we see in others:

"*Democritus' cattle eat his corn and spoil his fields, whilst his soaring mind ranges abroad without the body."*

But let us hear what advice the younger Pliny gives his friend Caninius Rufus upon the subject of solitude: "I advise thee, in the full and plentiful retirement wherein thou art, to leave to thy hinds the care of thy husbandry, and to addict thyself to the study of letters, to extract from thence something that may be entirely and absolutely thine own." By which he means reputation; like Cicero, who says that he would employ his solitude and retirement from public affairs to acquire by his writings an immortal life.

"*Is all that thou hast learned so far nothing, unless another knows that thou knowest?"*

It appears to be reason, when a man talks of retiring from the world, that he should look quite out of himself. These do it but by halves: they

design well enough for themselves when they shall be no more in it; but still they pretend to extract the fruits of that design from the world, when absent from it, by a ridiculous contradiction.

The imagination of those who seek solitude upon the account of devotion, filling their hopes and courage with certainty of divine promises in the other life, is much more rationally founded. They propose to themselves God, an infinite object in goodness and power; the soul has there wherewithal, at full liberty, to satiate her desires: afflictions and sufferings turn to their advantage, being undergone for the acquisition of eternal health and joy; death is to be wished and longed for, where it is the passage to so perfect a condition; the asperity of the rules they impose upon themselves is immediately softened by custom, and all their carnal appetites baffled and subdued, by refusing to humor and feed them, these being only supported by use and exercise. This sole end of another happily immortal life is that which really merits that we should abandon the pleasures and conveniences of this; and he who can really and constantly inflame his soul with the ardor of this vivid faith and hope, erects for himself in solitude a more voluptuous and delicious life than any other sort of existence.

Neither the end, then, nor the means of this advice pleases me; we always relapse ill from fever into fever. This book-employment is as painful as any other, and as great an enemy to health, which ought to be the first thing considered; neither ought a man to be allured with the pleasure of it, which is the same that destroys the frugal, the avaricious, the voluptuous, and the ambitious man. The sages give us caution enough to beware the treachery of our desires, and to distinguish true and entire pleasures from such as are mixed and complicated with greater pain. For the most of our pleasures, say they, wheedle and caress only to strangle us, like those thieves the Egyptians called Philistae; if the headache should come before drunkenness, we should have a care of drinking too much; but pleasure, to deceive us, marches before and conceals her train. Books are pleasant, but if, by being over-studious, we impair our health and spoil our good-humor, the best pieces we have, let us give it over; I, for my part, am one of those who think, that no fruit derived from them can recompense so great a loss. As men who have long felt themselves weakened by indisposition, give themselves up at last to the mercy of medicine and submit to certain rules of living, which they are for the future never to transgress; so he who retires, weary of and disgusted with the common way of living, ought to model this

new one he enters into by the rules of reason, and to institute and establish it by premeditation and reflection. He ought to have taken leave of all sorts of labor, what advantage soever it may promise, and generally to have shaken off all those passions which disturb the tranquillity of body and soul, and then choose the way that best suits with his own humor:—

"Unusquisque sua noverit ire via."

In husbandry, study, hunting, and all other exercises, men are to proceed to the utmost limits of pleasure, but must take heed of engaging further, where trouble begins to mix with it. We are to reserve so much employment only as is necessary to keep us in breath and to defend us from the inconveniences that the other extreme of a dull and stupid laziness brings along with it. There are sterile knotty sciences, chiefly hammered out for the crowd; let such be left to them who are engaged in the world's service. I for my part care for no other books, but either such as are pleasant and easy, to amuse me, or those that comfort and instruct me how to regulate my life and death:—

"Silently meditating in the healthy groves, whatever is worthy of a wise and good man."

Wiser men, having great force and vigor of soul, may propose to themselves a rest wholly spiritual: but for me, who have a very ordinary soul, it is very necessary to support myself with bodily conveniences; and age having of late deprived me of those pleasures that were more acceptable to me, I instruct and whet my appetite to those that remain, more suitable to this other season. We ought to hold with all our force, both of hands and teeth, the use of the pleasures of life that our years, one after another, snatch away from us:—

"Let us snatch the sweets; it is for us, as long as thou livest: thou wilt become ashes, and a spirit and a myth."

Now, as to the end that Pliny and Cicero propose to us of glory, 'tis infinitely wide of my account. Ambition is of all others the most contrary humor to solitude; glory and repose are things that cannot possibly inhabit in one and the same place. For so much as I understand, these have only their arms and legs disengaged from the crowd; their soul and intention remain confined behind more than ever:—

"Dost thou, then, old man, collect food for others' ears?"

they have only retired to take a better leap, and by a stronger motion to give a brisker charge into the crowd. Will you see how they shoot short? Let

us put into the counterpoise the advice of two philosophers, of two very different sects, writing, the one to Idomeneus, the other to Lucilius, their friends, to retire into solitude from worldly honors and affairs. “You have,” say they, “hitherto lived swimming and floating; come now and die in the harbor: you have given the first part of your life to the light, give what remains to the shade. It is impossible to give over business, if you do not also quit the fruit; therefore disengage yourselves from all concern of name and glory; ’tis to be feared the lustre of your former actions will give you but too much light, and follow you into your most private retreat. Quit with other pleasures that which proceeds from the approbation of another man: and as to your knowledge and parts, never concern yourselves; they will not lose their effect if yourselves be the better for them. Remember him, who being asked why he took so much pains in an art that could come to the knowledge of but few persons? ‘A few are enough for me,’ replied he; ‘I have enough with one; I have enough with never a one.’ He said true; you and a companion are theatre enough to one another, or you to yourself. Let the people be to you one, and be you one to the whole people. ’Tis an unworthy ambition to think to derive glory from a man’s sloth and privacy: you are to do like the beasts of chase, who efface the track at the entrance into their den. You are no more to concern yourself how the world talks of you, but how you are to talk to yourself. Retire yourself into yourself, but first prepare yourself there to receive yourself: it were a folly to trust yourself in your own hands, if you cannot govern yourself. A man may miscarry alone as well as in company. Till you have rendered yourself one before whom you dare not trip, and till you have a bashfulness and respect for yourself:—

“Let honest things be ever present to the mind;”

present continually to your imagination Cato, Phocion, and Aristides, in whose presence the fools themselves will hide their faults, and make them controllers of all your intentions; should these deviate from virtue, your respect to those will set you right; they will keep you in this way to be contented with yourself; to borrow nothing of any other but yourself; to stay and fix your soul in certain and limited thoughts, wherein she may please herself, and having understood the true and real goods, which men the more enjoy the more they understand, to rest satisfied, without desire of prolongation of life or name.” This is the precept of the true and natural

philosophy, not of a boasting and prating philosophy, such as that of the two former.

A CONSIDERATION UPON CICERO

ONE WORD more by way of comparison betwixt these two. There are to be gathered out of the writings of Cicero and the younger Pliny (but little, in my opinion, resembling his uncle in his humors) infinite testimonies of a beyond measure ambitious nature; and amongst others, this for one, that they both, in the sight of all the world, solicit the historians of their time not to forget them in their memoirs; and fortune, as if in spite, has made the vanity of those requests live upon record down to this age of ours, while she has long since consigned the histories themselves to oblivion. But this exceeds all meanness of spirit in persons of such a quality as they were, to think to derive any great renown from babbling and prating; even to the publishing of their private letters to their friends, and so withal, that though some of them were never sent, the opportunity being lost, they nevertheless presented them to the light, with this worthy excuse that they were unwilling to lose their labors and lucubrations. Was it not very well becoming two consuls of Rome, sovereign magistrates of the republic that commanded the world, to spend their leisure in contriving quaint and elegant missives, thence to gain the reputation of being versed in their own mother-tongues? What could a pitiful schoolmaster have done worse, whose trade it was thereby to get his living? If the acts of Xenophon and Caesar had not far transcended their eloquence, I scarce believe they would ever have taken the pains to have written them; they made it their business to recommend not their speaking, but their doing. And could the perfection of eloquence have added a lustre suitable to a great personage, certainly Scipio and Laaelius had never resigned the honor of their comedies, with all the luxuriances and elegances of the Latin tongue, to an African slave; for that the work was theirs, its beauty and excellence sufficiently declare; Terence himself confesses as much, and I should take it ill from any one that would dispossess me of that belief.

’Tis a kind of mockery and offence to extol a man for qualities misbecoming his condition, though otherwise commendable in themselves, but such as ought not, however, to be his chief talent; as if a man should commend a king for being a good painter, a good architect, a good marksman, or a good runner at the ring: commendations that add no honor, unless mentioned altogether and in the train of those that are properly

applicable to him, namely, justice and the science of governing and conducting his people both in peace and war. At this rate, agriculture was an honor to Cyrus, and eloquence and the knowledge of letters to Charlemagne. I have in my time known some, who by writing acquired both their titles and fortune, disown their apprenticeship, corrupt their style, and affect ignorance in so vulgar a quality (which also our nation holds to be rarely seen in very learned hands), and to seek a reputation by better qualities. Demosthenes' companions in the embassy to Philip, extolling that prince as handsome, eloquent, and a stout drinker, Demosthenes said that those were commendations more proper for a woman, an advocate, or a sponge, than for a king:—

"In the fight, overthrow your enemy, but be merciful to him when fallen."

'Tis not his profession to know either how to hunt or to dance well:—

"Others shall plead at the bar, and describe the spheres, and point out the glittering stars; let this man learn to rule the nations."

Plutarch says, moreover, that to appear so excellent in these less necessary qualities is to produce witness against a man's self, that he has spent his time and applied his study ill, which ought to have been employed in the acquisition of more necessary and more useful things. So that Philip, king of Macedon, having heard that great Alexander his son sing once at a feast to the wonder of the best musicians there: "Art thou not ashamed," said he to him, "to sing so well?" And to the same Philip a musician, with whom he was disputing about some things concerning his art: "Heaven forbid, sir," said he, "that so great a misfortune should ever befall you as to understand these things better than I." A king should be able to answer as Iphicrates invective after this manner: "And what art thou that thou bravest it at this rate art thou a man at arms, art thou an archer, art thou a pikeman?""I am none of all this; but I know how to command all these." And Antisthenes took it for an argument of little value in Ismenias that he was commended for playing excellently well upon a flute.

I know very well, that when I hear any one dwell upon the language of my essays, I had rather a great deal he would say nothing: 'tis not so much to elevate the style as to depress the sense, and so much the more offensively as they do it obliquely; and yet I am much deceived if many other writers deliver more worth noting as to the matter, and, how well or ill soever, if any other writer has sown things much more material, or at all

events more downright, upon his paper than myself. To bring the more in, I only muster up the heads; should I annex the sequel, I should trebly multiply the volume. And how many stories have I scattered up and down in this book that I only touch upon, which, should any one more curiously search into, they would find matter enough to produce infinite essays. Neither those stories nor my quotations always serve simply for example, authority, or ornament; I do not only regard them for the use I make of them: they carry sometimes besides what I apply them to, the seed of a more rich and a bolder matter, and sometimes, collaterally, a more delicate sound both to myself who will say no more about it in this place, and to others who shall be of my honor.

But returning to the speaking virtue: I find no great choice betwixt not knowing to speak anything but ill, and not knowing to speak anything but well:—

"A carefully arranged dress is no manly ornament."

The sages tell us that, as to what concerns knowledge, 'tis nothing but philosophy; and as to what concerns effects, nothing but virtue, which is generally proper to all degrees and to all orders.

There is something like this in these two other philosophers, for they also promise eternity to the letters they write to their friends; but 'tis after another manner, and by accommodating themselves, for a good end, to the vanity of another; for they write to them that if the concern of making themselves known to future ages, and the thirst of glory, do yet detain them in the management of public affairs, and make them fear the solitude and retirement to which they would persuade them, let them never trouble themselves more about it, forasmuch as they shall have credit enough with posterity to ensure them that were there nothing else but the letters thus written to them, those letters will render their names as known and famous as their own public actions could do. And besides this difference, these are not idle and empty letters, that contain nothing but a fine jingle of well-chosen words and delicate couched phrases, but rather replete and abounding with grand discourses of reason, by which a man may render himself not more eloquent, but more wise, and that instruct us not to speak, but to do well. Away with that eloquence that enchants us with itself, and not with actual things! unless you will allow that of Cicero to be of so supreme a perfection as to form a complete body of itself.

I shall farther add one story we read of him to this purpose, wherein his nature will much more manifestly be laid open to us. He was to make an oration in public, and found himself a little straitened for time to make himself ready at his ease; when Eros, one of his slaves, brought him word that the audience was deferred till the next day, at which he was so ravished with joy that he enfranchised him for the good news.

Upon this subject of letters, I will add this more to what has been already said, that it is a kind of writing wherein my friends think I can do something; and I am willing to confess I should rather have chosen to publish my whimsies that way than any other, had I had to whom to write; but I wanted such a settled intercourse, as I once had, to attract me to it, to raise my fancy, and to support me. For to traffic with the wind, as some others have done, and to forge vain names to direct my letters to, in a serious subject, I could never do it but in a dream, being a sworn enemy to all manner of falsification. I should have been more diligent and more confident had I had a judicious and indulgent friend whom to address, than thus to expose myself to the various judgments of a whole people, and I am deceived if I had not succeeded better. I have naturally a humorous and familiar style, but it is a style of my own, not proper for public business, but, like the language I speak, too compact, irregular, abrupt, and singular; and as to letters of ceremony that have no other substance than a fine contexture of courteous words, I am wholly to seek. I have neither faculty nor relish for those tedious tenders of service and affection; I believe little in them from others, and I should not forgive myself should I say to others more than I myself believe. ’Tis, doubtless, very remote from the present practice; for there never was so abject and servile prostitution of offers: life, soul, devotion, adoration, vassal, slave, and I cannot tell what, as now; all which expressions are so commonly and so indifferently posted to and fro by every one and to every one, that when they would profess a greater and more respectful inclination upon more just occasions, they have not wherewithal to express it. I mortally hate all air of flattery, which is the cause that I naturally fall into a shy, rough, and crude way of speaking, that, to such as do not know me, may seem a little to relish of disdain. I honor those most to whom I show the least honor, and where my soul moves with the greatest cheerfulness, I easily forget the ceremonies of look and gesture, and offer myself faintly and bluntly to them to whom I am the most devoted: methinks they should read it in my heart, and that the expression

of my words does but injure the love I have conceived within. To welcome, take leave, give thanks, accost, offer my service, and such verbal formalities as the ceremonious laws of our modern civility enjoin, I know no man so stupidly unprovided of language as myself; and I have never been employed in writing letters of favor and recommendation, that he, in whose behalf it was written, did not think my meditation cold and imperfect. The Italians are great printers of letters; I do believe I have at least a hundred several volumes of them; of all which those of Annibale Caro seem to me to be the best. If all the paper I have scribbled to the ladies at the time when my hand was really prompted by my passion, were now in being, there might, peradventure, be found a page worthy to be communicated to our young inamoratas, that are besotted with that fury. I always write my letters post-haste—so precipitately, that though I write intolerably ill, I rather choose to do it myself, than to employ another; for I can find none able to follow me: and I never transcribe any. I have accustomed the great ones who know me to endure my blots and dashes, and upon paper without fold or margin. Those that cost me the most pains, are the worst; when I once begin to draw it in by head and shoulders, ’tis a sign that I am not there. I fall to without premeditation or design; the first word begets the second, and so to the end of the chapter. The letters of this age consist more in fine edges and prefaces than in matter. Just as I had rather write two letters than close and fold up one, and always assign that employment to some other, so, when the real business of my letter is despatched, I would with all my heart transfer it to another hand to add those long harangues, offers, and prayers, that we place at the bottom, and should be glad that some new custom would discharge us of that trouble; as also of superscribing them with a long legend of qualities and titles, which for fear of mistakes, I have often not written at all, and especially to men of the long robe and finance; there are so many new offices, such a dispensation and ordering of titles of honor, that ’tis hard to set them forth aright: yet, being so dearly bought, they are neither to be altered nor forgotten without offence. I find it equally in bad taste to encumber the fronts and inscriptions of the books we commit to the press with such.

THAT THE TASTE FOR GOOD AND EVIL DEPENDS IN GOOD PART UPON THE OPINION WE HAVE OF THEM.

MEN (says an ancient Greek sentence) are tormented with the opinions they have of things and not by the things themselves. It were a great victory obtained for the relief of our miserable human condition, could this proposition be established for certain and true throughout. For if evils have no admission into us but by the judgment we ourselves make of them, it should seem that it is, then, in our own power to despise them or to turn them to good. If things surrender themselves to our mercy, why do we not convert and accommodate them to our advantage? If what we call evil and torment is neither evil nor torment of itself, but only that our fancy gives it that quality, it is in us to change it, and it being in our own choice, if there be no constraint upon us, we must certainly be very strange fools to take arms for that side which is most offensive to us, and to give sickness, want, and contempt a bitter and nauseous taste, if it be in our power to give them a pleasant relish, and if, fortune simply providing the matter, ’tis for us to give it the form. Now, that what we call evil is not so of itself, or at least to that degree that we make it, and that it depends upon us to give it another taste and complexion (for all comes to one), let us examine how that can be maintained.

If the original being of those things we fear had power to lodge itself in us by its own authority, it would then lodge itself alike, and in like manner, in all; for men are all of the same kind, and saving in greater and less proportions, are all provided with the same utensils and instruments to conceive and to judge; but the diversity of opinions we have of those things clearly evidences that they only enter us by composition; one person, peradventure, admits them in their true being, but a thousand others give them a new and contrary being in them. We hold death, poverty, and pain for our principal enemies; now, this death, which some repute the most dreadful of all dreadful things, who does not know that others call it the only secure harbor from the storms and tempests of life, the sovereign good of nature, the sole support of liberty, and the common and prompt remedy of all evils? And as the one expect it with fear and trembling, the others support it with greater ease than life. That one complains of its facility:—

"O death! wouldst that thou might spare the coward, but that valor alone should pay thee tribute."

Now, let us leave these boastful courages. Theodorus answered Lysimachus, who threatened to kill him, "Thou wilt do a brave feat," said he, "to attain the force of a cantharides." The majority of philosophers are observed to have either purposely anticipated, or hastened and assisted their own death. How many ordinary people do we see led to execution, and that not to a simple death, but mixed with shame and sometimes with grievous torments, appear with such assurance, whether through firm courage or natural simplicity, that a man can discover no change from their ordinary condition; settling their domestic affairs, commending themselves to their friends, singing, preaching, and addressing the people, nay, sometimes sallying into jests, and drinking to their companions, quite as well as Socrates?

One that they were leading to the gallows told them they must not take him through such a street, lest a merchant who lived there should arrest him by the way for an old debt. Another told the hangman he must not touch his neck for fear of making him laugh, he was so ticklish. Another answered his confessor, who promised him he should that day sup with our Lord, "Do you go then," said he, "in my room; for I for my part keep fast to-day." Another having called for drink, and the hangman having drunk first, said he would not drink after him, for fear of catching some evil disease. Everybody has heard the tale of the Picard, to whom, being upon the ladder, they presented a common wench, telling him (as our law does sometimes permit) that if he would marry her they would save his life; he, having a while considered her and perceiving that she halted: "Come, tie up, tie up," said he, "she limps." And they tell another story of the same kind of a fellow in Denmark, who being condemned to lose his head, and the like condition being proposed to him upon the scaffold, refused it, by reason the girl they offered him had hollow cheeks and too sharp a nose. A servant at Toulouse being accused of heresy, for the sum of his belief referred himself to that of his master, a young student, prisoner with him, choosing rather to die than suffer himself to be persuaded that his master could err. We read that of the inhabitants of Arras, when Louis XI. took that city, a great many let themselves be hanged rather than they would say, "God save the King." And amongst that mean-souled race of men, the buffoons, there have been some who would not leave their fooling at the very moment of death. One

that the hangman was turning off the ladder cried: “Launch the galley,” an ordinary saying of his. Another, whom at the point of death his friends had laid upon a bed of straw before the fire, the physician asking him where his pain lay: “Betwixt the bench and the fire,” said he, and the priest, to give him extreme unction, groping for his feet which his pain had made him pull up to him; “You will find them,” said he, “at the end of my legs.” To one who being present exhorted him to recommend himself to God: “Why, who goes thither?” said he; and the other replying: “It will presently be yourself, if it be His good pleasure.”“Shall I be sure to be there by to-morrow night?” said he. “Do but recommend yourself to Him,” said the other, “and you will soon be there.”“I were best then,” said he, “to carry my recommendations myself.”

In the kingdom of Narsingah to this day the wives of their priests are buried alive with the bodies of their husbands; all other wives are burnt at their husbands’ funerals, which they not only firmly but cheerfully undergo. At the death of their king, his wives and concubines, his favorites, all his officers, and domestic servants, who make up a whole people, present themselves so gaily to the fire where his body is burnt, that they seem to take it for a singular honor to accompany their master in death. During our late wars of Milan, where there happened so many takings and retakings of towns, the people, impatient of so many changes of fortune, took such a resolution to die, that I have heard my father say he there saw a list taken of five-and-twenty masters of families who made themselves away in one week’s time: an incident somewhat resembling that of the Xanthians, who being besieged by Brutus, fell—men, women, and children—into such a furious appetite of dying, that nothing can be done to evade death which they did not to avoid life; insomuch that Brutus had much difficulty in saving a very small number.

Every opinion is of force enough to cause itself to be espoused at the expense of life. The first article of that valiant oath that Greece took and observed in the Median war, was that every one should sooner exchange life for death, than their own laws for those of Persia. What a world of people do we see in the wars betwixt the Turks and the Greeks, rather embrace a cruel death than uncircumcise themselves to admit of baptism? An example of which no sort of religion is incapable.

The kings of Castile having banished the Jews out of their dominions, John, king of Portugal, in consideration of eight crowns a head, sold them a

retreat into his for a certain limited time, upon condition that the time fixed coming to expire they should be gone, and he to furnish they with shipping to transport them into Africa. The day comes, which once lapsed they were given to understand that such as were afterward found in the kingdom should remain slaves; vessels were very slenderly provided; and those who embarked in them were rudely and villainously used by the passengers, who, besides other indignities, kept them cruising upon the sea, one while forwards and another backwards, till they had spent all their provisions, and were constrained to buy of them at so dear a rate and so long withal, that they set them not on shore till they were all stripped to the very shirts. The news of this inhuman usage being brought to those who remained behind, the greater part of them resolved upon slavery and some made a show of changing religion. Emmanuel, the successor of John, being come to the crown, first set them at liberty, and afterwards altering his mind, ordered them to depart his country, assigning three ports for their passage. He hoped, says Bishop Osorius, no contemptible Latin historian of these later times, that the favor of the liberty he had given them having failed of converting them to Christianity, yet the difficulty of committing themselves to the mercy of the mariners and of abandoning a country they were now habituated to and were grown very rich in, to go and expose themselves in strange and unknown regions, would certainly do it. But finding himself deceived in his expectation, and that they were all resolved upon the voyage, he cut off two of the three ports he had promised them, to the end that the length and incommodity of the passage might reduce some, or that he might have opportunity, by crowding them all into one place, the more conveniently to execute what he had designed, which was to force all the children under fourteen years of age from the arms of their fathers and mothers, to transport them from their sight and conversation, into a place where they might be instructed and brought up in our religion. He says that this produced a most horrid spectacle: the natural affection betwixt the parents and their children, and moreover their zeal to their ancient belief, contending against this violent decree, fathers and mothers were commonly seen making themselves away, and by a yet much more rigorous example, precipitating out of love and compassion their young children into wells and pits, to avoid the severity of this law. As to the remainder of them, the time that had been prefixed being expired, for want of means to transport them they again returned into slavery. Some also turned Christians, upon whose

faith, as also that of their posterity, even to this day, which is a hundred years since, few Portuguese can yet rely; though custom and length of time are much more powerful counsellors in such changes than all other constraints whatever. In the town of Castelnaudari, fifty heretic Albigeois at one time suffered themselves to be burned alive in one fire rather than they would renounce their opinions:—

"How often have not only our leaders, but whole armies, run to a certain and manifest death."

I have seen an intimate friend of mine run headlong upon death with a real affection, and that was rooted in his heart by divers plausible arguments which he would never permit me to dispossess him of, and upon the first honorable occasion that offered itself to him, precipitate himself into it, without any manner of visible reason, with an obstinate and ardent desire of dying. We have several examples in our own times of persons, even young children, who for fear of some little inconvenience have despatched themselves. And what shall we not fear, says one of the ancients to this purpose, if we dread that which cowardice itself has chosen for its refuge?

Should I here produce a long catalogue of those, of all sexes and conditions and sects, even in the most happy ages, who have either with great constancy looked death in the face, or voluntarily sought it, and sought it not only to avoid the evils of this life, but some purely to avoid the satiety of living, and others for the hope of a better condition elsewhere, I should never have done. Nay, the number is so infinite that in truth I should have a better bargain on't to reckon up those who have feared it. This one therefore shall serve for all: Pyrrho the philosopher being one day in a boat in a very great tempest, showed to those he saw the most affrighted about him, and encouraged them, by the example of a hog that was there, nothing at all concerned at the storm. Shall we then dare to say that this advantage of reason, of which we so much boast, and upon the account of which we think ourselves masters and emperors over the rest of all creation, was given us for a torment? To what end serves the knowledge of things if it renders us more unmanly? if we thereby lose the tranquillity and repose we should enjoy without it? and if it put us into a worse condition than Pyrrho's hog? Shall we employ the understanding that was conferred upon us for our greatest good to our own ruin; setting ourselves against the design of nature and the universal order of things, which intend that every one should make use of the faculties, members, and means he has to his own best advantage?

But it may, peradventure, be objected against me: Your rule is true enough as to what concerns death; but what will you say of indigence? What will you, moreover, say of pain, which Aristippus, Hieronimus, and most of the sages have reputed the worst of evils; and those who have denied it by word of mouth have, however, confessed it in effect? Posidonius being extremely tormented with a sharp and painful disease, Pompeius came to visit him, excusing himself that he had taken so unseasonable a time to come to hear him discourse of philosophy. “The gods forbid,” said Posidonius to him, “that pain should ever have the power to hinder me from talking,” and thereupon fell immediately upon a discourse of the contempt of pain; but, in the meantime, his own infirmity was playing his part, and plagued him to purpose; to which he cried out, “Thou mayest work thy will, pain, and torment me with all the power thou hast, but thou shalt never make me say that thou art an evil.” This story that they make such a clutter withal, what has it to do, I fain would know, with the contempt of pain? He only fights it with words, and in the meantime, if the shootings and dolors he felt did not move him, why did he interrupt his discourse? Why did he fancy he did so great a thing in forbearing to confess it an evil? All does not here consist in the imagination; our fancies may work upon other things: but here is the certain science that is playing its part, of which our senses themselves are judges:—

“Which, if they be not true, all reasoning may also be false.”

Shall we persuade our skins that the jerks of a whip agreeably tickle us, or our taste that a potion of aloes is vin de Grave? Pyrrho’s hog is here in the same predicament with us; he is not afraid of death, ’tis true, but if you beat him he will cry out to some purpose. Shall we force the general law of nature, which in every living creature under heaven is seen to tremble under pain? The very trees seem to groan under the blows they receive. Death is only felt by reason, forasmuch as it is the motion of an instant:—

“Death has been, or will come: there is nothing of the present in it;”

“And death has less pain than the delay of it;”

a thousand beasts, a thousand men, are sooner dead than threatened. That also which we principally pretend to fear in death is pain, its ordinary forerunner: yet, if we may believe a holy father:—

“That which follows death makes death bad.”

And I should yet say, more probably, that neither that which goes before nor that which follows after is at all of the appurtenances of death.

We excuse ourselves falsely: and I find by experience that it is rather the impatience of the imagination of death that makes us impatient of pain, and that we find it doubly grievous as it threatens us with death. But reason accusing our cowardice for fearing a thing so sudden, so inevitable, and so insensible, we take the other as the more excusable pretence. All ills that carry no other danger along with them but simply the evils themselves, we treat as things of no danger: the toothache or the gout, painful as they are, yet being not reputed mortal, who reckons them in the catalogue of diseases?

But let us presuppose that in death we principally regard the pain; as also there is nothing to be feared in poverty but the miseries it brings along with it of thirst, hunger, cold, heat, watching, and the other inconveniences it makes us suffer, still we have nothing to do with anything but pain. I will grant, and very willingly, that it is the worst incident of our being (for I am the man upon earth who the most hates and avoids it, considering that hitherto, I thank God, I have had so little traffic with it), but still it is in us, if not to annihilate, at least to lessen it by patience; and though the body and the reason should mutiny, to maintain the soul, nevertheless, in good condition. Were it not so, who had ever given reputation to virtue, valor, force, magnanimity, and resolution? where were their parts to be played if there were no pain to be defied?

"Courage is greedy of danger."

Were there no lying upon the hard ground, no enduring, armed at all points, the meridional heats, no feeding upon the flesh of horses and asses, no seeing a man's self hacked and hewed to pieces, no suffering a bullet to be pulled out from amongst the shattered bones, no sewing up, cauterizing and searching of wounds, by what means were the advantage we covet to have over the vulgar to be acquired? 'Tis far from flying evil and pain, what the sages say, that of actions equally good, a man should most covet to perform that wherein there is greater labor and pain.

> *"For men are not only happy by mirth and wantonness, by laughter and jesting, the companion of levity, but ofttimes the serious sort reap felicity from their firmness and constancy."*

And for this reason it has ever been impossible to persuade our forefathers but that the victories obtained by dint of force and the hazard of

war were not more honorable than those performed in great security by stratagem or practice:—

“A good deed is all the more a satisfaction by how much the more it has cost us.”

Besides, this ought to be our comfort, that naturally, if the pain be violent, ’tis but short; and if long, nothing violent:—

- “Si gravis, brevis;
- Si longus, levis.”

Thou wilt not feel it long if thou feelest it too much; it will either put an end to itself or to thee; it comes to the same thing; if thou canst not support it, it will export thee:—

“Remember that the greatest pains are terminated by death; that slighter pains have long intermissions of repose, and that we are masters of the more moderate sort: so that, if they be tolerable, we bear them; if not, we can go out of life, as from a theatre, when it does not please us.”

That which makes us suffer pain with so much impatience is the not being accustomed to repose our chiefest contentment in the soul; that we do not enough rely upon her who is the sole and sovereign mistress of our condition. The body, saving in the greater or less proportion, has but one and the same bent and bias; whereas the soul is variable into all sorts of forms; and subject to herself and to her own empire, all things whatsoever, both the senses of the body and all other accidents: and therefore it is that we ought to study her, to inquire into her, and to rouse up all her powerful faculties. There is neither reason, force, nor prescription that can anything prevail against her inclination and choice. Of so many thousands of biasses that she has at her disposal, let us give her one proper to our repose and conversation, and then we shall not only be sheltered and secured from all manner of injury and offence, but moreover gratified and obliged, if she will, with evils and offences. She makes her profit indifferently of all things; error, dreams, serve her to good use, as loyal matter to lodge us in safety and contentment. ’Tis plain enough to be seen that ’tis the sharpness of our mind that gives the edge to our pains and pleasures: beasts that have no such thing, leave to their bodies their own free and natural sentiments, and consequently in every kind very near the same, as appears by the

resembling application of their motions. If we would not disturb in our members the jurisdiction that appertains to them in this, ’tis to be believed it would be the better for us, and that nature has given them a just and moderate temper both to pleasure and pain; neither can it fail of being just, being equal and common. But seeing we have enfranchised ourselves from her rules to give ourselves up to the rambling liberty of our own fancies, let us at least help to incline them to the most agreeable side. Plato fears our too vehemently engaging ourselves with pain and pleasure, forasmuch as these too much knit and ally the soul to the body; whereas I rather, quite contrary, by reason it too much separates and disunites them. As an enemy is made more fierce by our flight, so pain grows proud to see us truckle under her. She will surrender upon much better terms to them who make head against her; a man must oppose and stoutly set himself against her. In retiring and giving ground, we invite and pull upon ourselves the ruin that threatens us. As the body is more firm in an encounter, the more stiffly and obstinately it applies itself to it, so is it with the soul.

But let us come to examples, which are the proper game of folks of such feeble force as myself; where we shall find that it is with pain as with stones, that receive a brighter or a duller lustre according to the foil they are set in, and that it has no more room in us than we are pleased to allow it:—

> *“They suffered so much the more, as they associated themselves with suffering.”*

We are more sensible of one little touch of a surgeon’s lancet than of twenty wounds with a sword in the heat of fight. The pains of child-bearing, said by the physicians and by God himself to be great, and which we pass through with so many ceremonies—there are whole nations that make nothing of them. I set aside the Lacedaemonian women, but what else do you find in the Swiss among our foot-soldiers, if not that, as they trot after their husbands, you see them to-day carry the child at their necks that they carried yesterday in their bellies? The counterfeit Egyptians we have amongst us go themselves to wash theirs, so soon as they come into the world, and bathe in the first river they meet. Besides so many wenches as daily drop their children by stealth, as they conceived them, that fair and noble wife of Sabinus, a patrician of Rome, for another’s interest, endured alone, without help, without crying out, or so much as a groan, the bearing of twins. A poor simple boy of Lacedaemon having stolen a fox (for they more fear the shame of stupidity in stealing than we do the punishment of

the knavery), and having got it under his coat, rather endured the tearing out of his bowels than he would discover his theft. And another offering incense at a sacrifice, suffered himself to be burned to the bone by a coal that fell into his sleeve, rather than disturb the ceremony. And there have been a great number, for a sole trial of virtue, following their institutions, who have at seven years old endured to be whipped to death without changing their countenance. And Cicero has seen them fight in parties, with fists, feet, and teeth, till they have fainted and sunk down, rather than confess themselves overcome:—

> *"Custom could never conquer nature; she is ever invincible; but we have infected the mind with shadows, delights, negligence, sloth; we have grown effeminate through opinions and corrupt morality."*

Every one knows the story of Scaevola, that having slipped into the enemy's camp to kill their general, and having missed his blow, to repair his fault, by a more strange invention and to deliver his country, he boldly confessed to Porsenna, who was the king he had a purpose to kill, not only his design, but moreover added that there were then in the camp a great number of Romans, his accomplices in the enterprise, as good men as he; and to show what a one he himself was, having caused a pan of burning coals to be brought, he saw and endured his arm to broil and roast, till the king himself, conceiving horror at the sight, commanded the pan to be taken away. What would you say of him that would not vouchsafe to respite his reading in a book whilst he was under incision? And of the other that persisted to mock and laugh in contempt of the pains inflicted upon him; so that the provoked cruelty of the executioners that had him in handling, and all the inventions of tortures redoubled upon him, one after another, spent in vain, gave him the bucklers? But he was a philosopher. But what! a gladiator of Caesar's endured, laughing all the while, his wounds to be searched, lanced, and laid open:—

> *"What ordinary gladiator ever groaned? Which of them ever changed countenance? Which of them not only stood or fell indecorously? Which, when he had fallen and was commanded to receive the stroke of the sword, contracted his neck."*

Let us bring in the women too. Who has not heard at Paris of her that caused her face to be flayed only for the fresher complexion of a new skin? There are who have drawn good and sound teeth to make their voices more soft and sweet, or to place the other teeth in better order. How many

examples of the contempt of pain have we in that sex? What can they not do, what do they fear to do, for never so little hope of an addition to their beauty?

> *"Who carefully pluck out their grey hairs by the roots, and renew their faces by peeling off the old skin."*

I have seen some of them swallow sand, ashes, and do their utmost to destroy their stomachs to get pale complexions. To make a fine Spanish body, what racks will they not endure of girding and bracing, till they have notches in their sides cut into the very quick, and sometimes to death?

It is an ordinary thing with several nations at this day to wound themselves in good earnest to gain credit to what they profess; of which our king relates notable examples of what he has seen in Poland and done towards himself. But besides this, which I know to have been imitated by some in France, when I came from that famous assembly of the Estates at Blois, I had a little before seen a maid in Picardy, who to manifest the ardor of her promises, as also her constancy, give herself, with a bodkin she wore in her hair, four or five good lusty stabs in the arm, till the blood gushed out to some purpose. The Turks give themselves great scars in honor of their mistresses, and to the end they may the longer remain, they presently clap fire to the wound, where they hold it an incredible time to stop the blood and form the cicatrice; people that have been eyewitnesses of it have both written and sworn it to me. But for ten aspers there are there every day fellows to be found that will give themselves a good deep slash in the arms or thighs. I am willing, however, to have the testimonies nearest to us when we have most need of them; for Christendom furnishes us with enough. After the example of our blessed Guide there have been many who have crucified themselves. We learn by testimony very worthy of belief, that King St. Louis wore a hair-shirt till in his old age his confessor gave him a dispensation to leave it off; and that every Friday he caused his shoulders to be drubbed by his priest with five small chains of iron which were always carried about amongst his night accoutrements for that purpose.

Guillaume, our last Duke of Guienne, the father of that Eleanor who transmitted that duchy to the houses of France and England, continually for the last ten or twelve years of his life wore a suit of armor under a religious habit by way of penance. Foulques, Count of Anjou, went as far as Jerusalem, there to cause himself to be whipped by two of his servants, with a rope about his neck, before the sepulchre of our Lord. But do we not,

moreover, every Good Friday, in various places, see great numbers of men and women beat and whip themselves till they lacerate and cut the flesh to the very bones? I have often seen it, and ’tis without any enchantment; and it was said there were some amongst them (for they go disguised) who for money undertook by this means to save harmless the religion of others, by a contempt of pain, so much the greater, as the incentives of devotion are more effectual than those of avarice. Q. Maximus buried his son when he was a consul, and M. Cato his when praetor elect, and L. Paulus both his, within a few days one after another, with such a countenance as expressed no manner of grief. I said in my days of one, that he had disappointed the divine justice; for the violent death of three grown-up children of his being one day sent him, for a severe scourge, as it is to be supposed, he was so far from being afflicted at the accident, that he rather took it for a particular grace and favor of heaven. I do not follow these monstrous humors, though I lost two or three at nurse, if not without grief, at least without repining, and yet there is hardly any accident that pierces nearer to the quick. I see a great many other occasions of sorrow, that should they happen to me I should hardly feel; and have despised some, when they have befallen me, to which the world has given so terrible a figure that I should blush to boast of my constancy:—

“By which one may understand that grief is not in nature, but in opinion.”

Opinion is a powerful party, bold, and without measure. Whoever so greedily hunted after security and repose as Alexander and Caesar did after disturbance and difficulties? Teres, the father of Sitalces, was wont to say that when he had no wars, he fancied there was no difference betwixt him and his groom. Cato the consul, to secure some cities of Spain from revolt, only interdicting the inhabitants from wearing arms, a great many killed themselves:—

“A fierce people, who thought there was no life without war.”

How many do we know who have forsaken the calm and sweetness of a quiet life at home amongst their acquaintance, to seek out the horror of unhabitable deserts; and having precipitated themselves into so abject a condition as to become the scorn and contempt of the world have hugged themselves with the conceit, even to affectation. Cardinal Borromeo, who died lately at Milan, amidst all the jollity that the air of Italy, his youth, birth, and great riches, invited him to, kept himself in so austere a way of

living, that the same robe he wore in summer served him for winter too; he had only straw for his bed, and his hours of leisure from affairs he continually spent in study upon his knees, having a little bread and a glass of water set by his book, which was all the provision of his repast, and all the time he spent in eating.

I know some who consentingly have acquired both profit and advancement from cuckoldom, of which the bare name only affrights so many people.

If the sight be not the most necessary of all our senses, ’tis at least the most pleasant; but the most pleasant and most useful of all and yet a great many have conceived a mortal hatred against them only for this, that they were too pleasant, and have deprived themselves of them only for their value: as much thought he of his eyes that put them out. The generality and more solid sort of men look upon abundance of children as a great blessing; I, and some others, think it as great a benefit to be without them. And when you ask Thales why he does not marry, he tells you, because he has no mind to leave any posterity behind him.

That our opinion gives the value to things is very manifest in the great number of those which we do, not so much prizing them, as ourselves, and never considering either their virtues or their use, but only how dear they cost us, as though that were a part of their substance; and we only repute for value in them, not what they bring to us, but what we add to them. By which I understand that we are great economizers of our expense: as it weighs, it serves for so much as it weighs. Our opinion will never suffer it to want of its value: the price gives value to the diamond; difficulty to virtue; suffering to devotion; and griping to physic. A certain person, to be poor, threw his crowns into the same sea to which so many come, in all parts of the world, to fish for riches. Epicurus says that to be rich is no relief, but only an alteration, of affairs. In truth, it is not want, but rather abundance, that creates avarice. I will deliver my own experience concerning this affair.

I have since my emergence from childhood lived in three sorts of conditions. The first, which continued for some twenty years, I passed over without any other means but what were casual and depending upon the allowance and assistance of others, without stint, but without certain revenue. I then spent my money so much the more cheerfully, and with so much the less care how it went, as it wholly depended upon my

overconfidence of fortune. I never lived more at my ease; I never had the repulse of finding the purse of any of my friends shut against me, having enjoined myself this necessity above all other necessities whatever, by no means to fail of payment at the appointed time, which also they have a thousand times respited, seeing how careful I was to satisfy them; so that I practised at once a thrifty, and withal a kind of alluring, honesty. I naturally feel a kind of pleasure in paying, as if I eased my shoulders of a troublesome weight and freed myself from an image of slavery; as also that I find a ravishing kind of satisfaction in pleasing another and doing a just action. I except payments where the trouble of bargaining and reckoning is required; and in such cases, where I can meet with nobody to ease me of that charge, I delay them, how scandalously and injuriously soever, all I possibly can, for fear of the wranglings for which both my humor and way of speaking are so totally improper and unfit. There is nothing I hate so much as driving a bargain; ’tis a mere traffic of cozenage and impudence, where, after an hour’s cheapening and hesitating, both parties abandon their word and oath for five sols’ abatement. Yet I always borrowed at great disadvantage; for, wanting the confidence to speak to the person myself, I committed my request to the persuasion of a letter, which usually is no very successful advocate, and is of very great advantage to him who has a mind to deny. I, in those days, more jocundly and freely referred the conduct of my affairs to the stars, than I have since done to my own providence and judgment. Most good managers look upon it as a horrible thing to live always thus in uncertainty, and do not consider, in the first place, that the greatest part of the world live so: how many worthy men have wholly abandoned their own certainties, and yet daily do it, to the winds, to trust to the inconstant favor of princes and of fortune? Caesar ran above a million of gold, more than he was worth, in debt to become Caesar; and how many merchants have begun their traffic by the sale of their farms, which they sent into the Indies,

“Through so many ungovernable seas.”

In so great a siccity of devotion as we see in these days, we have a thousand and a thousand colleges, that pass it over commodiously enough, expecting every day their dinner from the liberality of Heaven. Secondly, they do not take notice that this certitude upon which they so much rely is not much less uncertain and hazardous than hazard itself. I see misery as near beyond two thousand crowns a year as if it stood close by me; for

besides that it is in the power of chance to make a hundred breaches to poverty through the greatest strength of our riches—there being very often no mean betwixt the highest and the lowest fortune:—

"Fortune is made of glass: at the moment when it is resplendent, it is broken,"

and to turn all our barricadoes and bulwarks topsy-turvy, I find that, by divers causes, indigence is as frequently seen to inhabit with those who have estates as with those that have none; and that, peradventure, it is then far less grievous when alone than when accompanied with riches. These flow more from good management than from revenue;

"Every one is the maker of his own fortune;"

and an uneasy, necessitous, busy, rich man seems to me more miserable than he that is simply poor.

"Poor in the midst of riches, which is the sorest kind of poverty."

The greatest and most wealthy princes are by poverty and want driven to the most extreme necessity; for can there be any more extreme than to become tyrants and unjust usurpers of their subjects' goods and estates?

My second condition of life was to have money of my own, wherein I so ordered the matter that I had soon laid up a very notable sum out of a mean fortune, considering with myself that that only was to be reputed having which a man reserves from his ordinary expense, and that a man cannot absolutely rely upon revenue he hopes to receive, how clear soever the hope may be. For what, said I, if I should be surprised by such or such an accident? And after such-like vain and vicious imaginations, would very learnedly, by this hoarding of money, provide against all inconveniences; and could, moreover, answer such as objected to me that the number of these was too infinite, that if I could not lay up for all, I could, however, do it at least for some and for many. Yet was not this done without a great deal of solicitude and anxiety of mind; I kept it very close, and though I dare talk so boldly of myself, never spoke of my money, but falsely, as others do, who being rich, pretend to be poor, and being poor, pretend to be rich, dispensing their consciences from ever telling sincerely what they have: a ridiculous and shameful prudence. Was I going a journey? Methought I was never enough provided: and the more I loaded myself with money, the more also was I loaded with fear, one while of the danger of the roads, another of the fidelity of him who had the charge of my baggage, of whom, as some others that I know, I was never sufficiently secure if I had him not always in

my eye. If I chanced to leave my cash-box behind me, O, what strange suspicions and anxiety of mind did I enter into, and, which was worse, without daring to acquaint anybody with it. My mind was eternally taken up with such things as these, so that, all things considered, there is more trouble in keeping money than in getting it. And if I did not altogether so much as I say, or was not really so scandalously solicitous of my money as I have made myself out to be, yet it cost me something at least to restrain myself from being so. I reaped little or no advantage by what I had, and my expenses seemed nothing less to me for having the more to spend; for, as Bion said, the hairy men are as angry as the bald to be pulled; and after you are once accustomed to it and have once set your heart upon your heap, it is no more at your service; you cannot find in your heart to break it: ’tis a building that you will fancy must of necessity all tumble down to ruin if you stir but the least pebble; necessity must first take you by the throat before you can prevail upon yourself to touch it; and I would sooner have pawned anything I had, or sold a horse, and with much less constraint upon myself, than have made the least breach in that beloved purse I had so carefully laid by. But the danger was that a man cannot easily prescribe certain limits to this desire (they are hard to find in things that a man conceives to be good), and to stint this good husbandry so that it may not degenerate into avarice: men still are intent upon adding to the heap and increasing the stock from sum to sum, till at last they vilely deprive themselves of the enjoyment of their own proper goods, and throw all into reserve, without making any use of them at all. According to this rule, they are the richest people in the world who are set to guard the walls and gates of a wealthy city. All moneyed men I conclude to be covetous. Plato places corporal or human goods in this order: health, beauty, strength, riches; and riches, says he, are not blind, but very clearsighted, when illuminated by prudence. Dionysius the son did a very handsome act upon this subject; he was informed that one of the Syracusans had hid a treasure in the earth, and thereupon sent to the man to bring it to him, which he accordingly did, privately reserving a small part of it only to himself, with which he went to another city, where being cured of his appetite of hoarding, he began to live at a more liberal rate; which Dionysius hearing, caused the rest of his treasure to be restored to him, saying, that since he had learned to use it, he very willingly returned it back to him.

I continued some years in this hoarding humor, when I know not what good demon fortunately put me out of it, as he did the Syracusan, and made me throw abroad all my reserve at random, the pleasure of a certain journey I took at very great expense having made me spurn this fond love of money underfoot; by which means I am now fallen into a third way of living (I speak what I think of it), doubtless much more pleasant and regular, which is, that I live at the height of my revenue; sometimes the one, sometimes the other may perhaps exceed, but ’tis very little and but rarely that they differ. I live from hand to mouth, and content myself in having sufficient for my present and ordinary expense; for as to extraordinary occasions, all the laying up in the world would never suffice. And ’tis the greatest folly imaginable to expect that fortune should ever sufficiently arm us against herself; ’tis with our own arms that we are to fight her; accidental ones will betray us in the pinch of the business. If I lay up, ’tis for some near and contemplated purpose; not to purchase lands, of which I have no need, but to purchase pleasure:—

“Not to be covetous, is money; not to be acquisitive, is revenue.”

I neither am in any great apprehension of wanting, nor in desire of any more:—

“The fruit of riches is in abundance; satiety declares abundance.”

And I am very well pleased that this reformation in me has fallen out in an age naturally inclined to avarice, and that I see myself cleared of a folly so common to old men, and the most ridiculous of all human follies.

Pheraulas, a man that had run through both fortunes, and found that the increase of substance was no increase of appetite either to eating or drinking, sleeping or the enjoyment of his wife, and who on the other side felt the care of his economics lie heavy upon his shoulders, as it does on mine, was resolved to please a poor young man, his faithful friend, who panted after riches, and made him a gift of all his, which were excessively great, and, moreover, of all he was in the daily way of getting by the liberality of Cyrus, his good master, and by the war; conditionally that he should take care handsomely to maintain and plentifully to entertain him as his guest and friend; which being accordingly done, they afterwards lived very happily together, both of them equally content with the change of their condition. ’Tis an example that I could imitate with all my heart; and I very much approve the fortune of the aged prelate whom I see to have so

absolutely stripped himself of his purse, his revenue, and care of his expense, committing them one while to one trusty servant, and another while to another, that he has spun out a long succession of years, as ignorant, by this means, of his domestic affairs as a mere stranger. The confidence in another man's virtue is no light evidence of a man's own, and God willingly favors such a confidence. As to what concerns him of whom I am speaking, I see nowhere a better governed house, more nobly and constantly maintained than his. Happy to have regulated his affairs to so just a proportion that his estate is sufficient to do it without his care or trouble, and without any hindrance, either in the spending or laying it up, to his other more quiet employments, and more suitable both to his place and liking.

Plenty, then, and indigence depend upon the opinion every one has of them; and riches no more than glory or health have other beauty or pleasure than he lends them by whom they are possessed. Every one is well or ill at ease, according as he so finds himself; not he whom the world believes, but he who believes himself to be so, is content; and in this alone belief gives itself being and reality. Fortune does us neither good nor hurt; she only presents us the matter and the seed, which our soul, more powerful than she, turns and applies as she best pleases; the sole cause and sovereign mistress of her own happy or unhappy condition. All external accessions receive taste and color from the internal constitution, as clothes warm us, not with their heat, but our own, which they are fit to cover and nourish; he who would shield therewith a cold body, would do the same service for the cold, for so snow and ice are preserved. And, certes, after the same manner that study is a torment to an idle man, abstinence from wine to a drunkard, frugality to the spend-thrift, and exercise to a lazy, tender-bred fellow, so it is of all the rest. The things are not so painful and difficult of themselves, but our weakness or cowardice makes them so. To judge of great and high matters requires a suitable soul; otherwise we attribute the vice to them which is really our own. A straight oar seems crooked in the water: it does not only import that we see the thing, but how and after what manner we see it.

After all this, why, amongst so many discourses that by so many arguments persuade men to despise death and to endure pain, can we not find out one that helps us? And of so many sorts of imaginations as have so prevailed upon others as to persuade them to do so, why does not every one

apply some one to himself, the most suitable to his own humor? If he cannot digest a strong-working decoction to eradicate the evil, let him at least take a lenitive to ease it:—

> *“It is an effeminate and flimsy opinion, nor more so in pain than in pleasure, in which, while we are at our ease, we cannot bear without a cry the sting of a bee. The whole business is to commend thyself.”*

As to the rest, a man does not transgress philosophy by permitting the acrimony of pains and human frailty to prevail so much above measure; for they constrain her to go back to her unanswerable replies: “If it be ill to live in necessity, at least there is no necessity upon a man to live in necessity:”“No man continues ill long but by his own fault.” He who has neither the courage to die nor the heart to live, who will neither resist nor fly, what can we do with him?

NOT TO COMMUNICATE ONE'S GLORY

OF ALL the follies of the world, that which is most universally received is the solicitude of reputation and glory; which we are fond of to that degree as to abandon riches, peace, life, and health, which are effectual and substantial goods, to pursue this vain phantom and empty word, that has neither body nor hold to be taken of it:—

> *"Fame, which with alluring sound charms proud mortals, and appears so fair, is but an echo, a dream, nay, the shadow of a dream, which at every breath vanishes and dissolves."*

And of all the irrational humors of men, it should seem that the philosophers themselves are among the last and most reluctant to disengage themselves from this: 'tis the most restive and obstinate of all:—

> *"Because it ceases not to assail even well-directed minds."*

There is not any one of which reason so clearly accuses the vanity; but it is so deeply rooted in us that I dare not determine whether any one ever clearly discharged himself from it or no. After you have said all and believed all has been said to its prejudice, it produces so intestine an inclination in opposition to your best arguments that you have little power to resist it; for, as Cicero says, even those who most controvert it, would yet that the books they write about it should visit the light under their own names, and seek to derive glory from seeming to despise it. All other things are communicable and fall into commerce: we lend our goods and stake our lives for the necessity and service of our friends; but to communicate a man's honor, and to robe another with a man's own glory, is very rarely seen.

And yet we have some examples of that kind. Catulus Luctatius in the Cimbrian war, having done all that in him lay to make his flying soldiers face about upon the enemy, ran himself at last away with the rest, and counterfeited the coward, to the end his men might rather seem to follow their captain than to fly from the enemy; which was to abandon his own reputation in order to cover the shame of others. When Charles V. came into Provence in the year 1537, 'tis said that Antonio de Leva, seeing the emperor positively resolved upon this expedition, and believing it would redound very much to his honor, did, nevertheless, very stiffly oppose it in the council, to the end that the entire glory of that resolution should be

attributed to his master, and that it might be said his own wisdom and foresight had been such as that, contrary to the opinion of all, he had brought about so great an enterprise; which was to do him honor at his own expense. The Thracian ambassadors coming to comfort Archileonida, the mother of Brasidas, upon the death of her son, and commending him to that height as to say he had not left his like behind him, she rejected this private and particular commendation to attribute it to the public: “Tell me not that,” said she; “I know the city of Sparta has many citizens both greater and of greater worth than he.” In the battle of Crecy, the Prince of Wales, being then very young, had the vanguard committed to him: the main stress of the battle happened to be in that place, which made the lords who were with him, finding themselves overmatched, send to King Edward to advance to their relief. He inquired of the condition his son was in, and being answered that he was alive and on horseback: “I should, then, do him wrong,” said the king, “now to go and deprive him of the honor of winning this battle he has so long and so bravely sustained; what hazard soever he runs, that shall be entirely his own;” and, accordingly, would neither go nor send, knowing that if he went, it would be said all had been lost without his succor, and that the honor of the victory would be wholly attributed to him.

> *“For always that which is last added, seems to have accomplished the whole affair.”*

Many at Rome thought, and would usually say, that the greatest of Scipio’s acts were in part due to Laelius, whose constant practice it was still to advance and support Scipio’s grandeur and renown, without any care of his own. And Theopompus, king of Sparta, to him who told him the republic could not miscarry since he knew so well how to command, “’Tis rather,” answered he, “because the people know so well how to obey.” As women succeeding to peerages had, notwithstanding their sex, the privilege to attend and give their votes in the trials that appertained to the jurisdiction of peers; so the ecclesiastical peers, notwithstanding their profession, were obliged to attend our kings in their wars, not only with their friends and servants, but in their own persons. As the Bishop of Beauvais did, who being with Philip Augustus at the battle of Bouvines, had a notable share in that action; but he did not think it fit for him to participate in the fruit and glory of that violent and bloody trade. He with his own hand reduced several of the enemy that day to his mercy, whom he delivered to the first gentleman he met either to kill or receive them to quarter, referring the

whole execution to this other hand; and he did this with regard to William, Earl of Salisbury, whom he gave up to Messire Jehan de Nesle. With a like subtlety of conscience to that I have just named, he would kill but not wound, and for that reason ever fought with a mace. And a certain person of my time, being reproached by the king that he had laid hands on a priest, stiffly and positively denied he had done any such thing: the meaning of which was, he had cudgelled and kicked him.

OF THE INEQUALITY WHICH IS BETWEEN US

PLUTARCH SAYS somewhere that he does not find so great a difference betwixt beast and beast as he does betwixt man and man; which he says in reference to the internal qualities and perfections of the soul. And, in truth, I find so vast a distance betwixt Epaminondas, according to my judgment of him, and some that I know, who are yet men of good sense, that I could willingly enhance upon Plutarch, and say that there is more difference betwixt such and such a man than there is betwixt such a man and such a beast:—

"Immortal gods! why does man excel man?"

and that there are as many and innumerable degrees of mind as there are cubits betwixt this and heaven. But as touching the estimate of men, 'tis strange that, ourselves excepted, no other creature is esteemed beyond its proper qualities; we commend a horse for his strength and sureness of foot:—

"So we praise the swift horse, for whose easy mastery many a hand glows in applause, and victory exults in the hoarse circus."

and not for his rich caparison; a greyhound for his speed of heels, not for his fine collar; a hawk for her wing, not for her gesses and bells. Why, in like manner, do we not value a man for what is properly his own? He has a great train, a beautiful palace, so much credit, so many thousand pounds a year: all these are about him, but not in him. You will not buy a pig in a poke: if you cheapen a horse, you will see him stripped of his housing-cloths, you will see him naked and open to your eye; or if he be clothed, as they anciently were wont to present them to princes to sell, 'tis only on the less important parts, that you may not so much consider the beauty of his color or the breadth of his crupper, as principally to examine his legs, eyes, and feet, which are the members of greatest use:—

"This is the custom of kings: when they buy horses, they have open inspection, lest, if a fair head, as often chances, is supported by a weak foot, it should tempt the gaping purchaser:"

why, in giving your estimate of a man, do you prize him wrapped and muffled up in clothes? He then discovers nothing to you but such parts as are not in the least his own, and conceals those by which alone one may rightly judge of his value. 'Tis the price of the blade that you inquire into,

not of the scabbard: you would not peradventure bid a farthing for him, if you saw him stripped. You are to judge him by himself and not by what he wears; and, as one of the ancients very pleasantly said: “Do you know why you repute him tall? You reckon withal the height of his pattens.” The pedestal is no part of the statue. Measure him without his stilts; let him lay aside his revenues and his titles; let him present himself in his shirt. Then examine if his body be sound and sprightly, active and disposed to perform its functions. What soul has he? Is she beautiful, capable, and happily provided of all her faculties? Is she rich of what is her own, or of what she has borrowed? Has fortune no hand in the affair? Can she, without winking, stand the lightning of swords? is she indifferent whether her life expire by the mouth or through the throat? Is she settled, even and content? This is what is to be examined, and by that you are to judge of the vast differences betwixt man and man. Is he:—

> “*The wise man, self-governed, whom neither poverty, nor death, nor chains affright: who has the strength to resist his appetites and to contemn honors: who is wholly self-contained: whom no external objects affect: whom fortune assails in vain.*”

such a man is five hundred cubits above kingdoms and duchies; he is an absolute monarch in and to himself:—

> “*The wise man is the master of his own fortune;*”

what remains for him to covet or desire?—

> “*Do we not see that human nature asks no more for itself than that, free from bodily pain, it may exercise its mind agreeably, exempt from care and fear?*”

Compare with such a one the common rabble of mankind, stupid and mean-spirited, servile, instable, and continually floating with the tempest of various passions, that tosses and tumbles them to and fro, and all depending upon others, and you will find a greater distance than betwixt heaven and earth; and yet the blindness of common usage is such that we make little or no account of it; whereas if we consider a peasant and a king, a nobleman and a vassal, a magistrate and a private man, a rich man and a poor, there appears a vast disparity, though they differ no more, as a man may say, than in their breeches.

In Thrace the king was distinguished from his people after a very pleasant and especial manner; he had a religion by himself, a god all his own, and which his subjects were not to presume to adore, which was

Mercury, whilst, on the other hand, he disdained to have anything to do with theirs, Mars, Bacchus, and Diana. And yet they are no other than pictures that make no essential dissimilitude; for as you see actors in a play representing the person of a duke or an emperor upon the stage, and immediately after return to their true and original condition of valets and porters, so the emperor, whose pomp and lustre so dazzle you in public:—

> *"And large emeralds with their green lustre are set in gold, and the sea-colored robe is constantly worn, and absorbs the sweat of Venus;"*

do but peep behind the curtain, and you will see nothing more than an ordinary man, and peradventure more contemptible than the meanest of his subjects:—

> *"The one is happy in himself; the happiness of the other is counterfeit;"*

cowardice, irresolution, ambition, spite, and envy agitate him as much as another:—

> *"For not treasures, nor the consular lictor, can remove the miserable tumults of the mind, nor cares that fly about panelled ceilings."*

Care and fear attack him even in the centre of his battalions:—

> *"And in truth the fears and haunting cares of men fear not the clash of arms nor points of darts, and mingle boldly with great kings and men in authority, nor respect the glitter of gold."*

Do fevers, gout, and apoplexies spare him any more than one of us? When old age hangs heavy upon his shoulders, can the yeomen of his guard ease him of the burden? When he is astounded with the apprehension of death, can the gentlemen of his bedchamber comfort and assure him? When jealousy or any other caprice swims in his brain, can our compliments and ceremonies restore him to his good-humor? The canopy embroidered with pearl and gold he lies under has no virtue against a violent fit of the colic:—

> *"Nor do burning fevers quit you sooner if you are stretched on a couch of rich tapestry and in a vest of purple dye, than if you be in a coarse blanket."*

The flatterers of Alexander the Great possessed him that he was the son of Jupiter; but being one day wounded, and observing the blood stream from his wound: "What say you now, my masters," said he, "is not this blood of a crimson color and purely human? This is not the complexion of

that which Homer makes to issue from the wounded gods." The poet Hermodorus had written a poem in honor of Antigonus, wherein he called him the son of the sun: "He who has the emptying of my close-stool," said Antigonus, "knows to the contrary." He is but a man at best, and if he be deformed or ill-qualified from his birth, the empire of the universe cannot set him to rights:—

"Let girls carry him off; wherever he steps let there spring up a rose!"

what of all that, if he be a fool? even pleasure and good fortune are not relished without vigor and understanding:—

"Things are, as is the mind of their possessor; who knows how to use them, to him they are good; to him who abuses them, ill."

Whatever the benefits of fortune are, they yet require a palate to relish them. 'Tis fruition, and not possession, that renders us happy:—

"'Tis not lands, or a heap of brass and gold, that has removed fevers from the ailing body of the owner, or cares from his mind. The possessor must be healthy, if he thinks to make good use of his realized wealth. To him who is covetous or timorous his house and estate are as a picture to a blind man, or a fomentation to a gouty."

He is a sot, his taste is palled and flat; he no more enjoys what he has than one that has a cold relishes the flavor of canary, or than a horse is sensible of his rich caparison. Plato is in the right when he tells us that health, beauty, vigor, and riches, and all the other things called goods, are equally evil to the unjust as good to the just, and the evil on the contrary the same. And therefore where the body and the mind are in disorder, to what use serve these external conveniences: considering that the least prick with a pin, or the least passion of the soul, is sufficient to deprive one of the pleasure of being sole monarch of the world. At the first twitch of the gout it signifies much to be called Sir and Your Majesty!—

"Wholly made up of silver and gold;"

does he not forget his palaces and grandeurs? If he be angry, can his being a prince keep him from looking red and looking pale, and grinding his teeth like a madman? Now, if he be a man of parts and of right nature, royalty adds very little to his happiness:—

"If it is well with thy belly, thy side and thy feet, regal wealth will be able to add nothing;"

he discerns ’tis nothing but counterfeit and gullery. Nay, perhaps he would be of King Seleucus’ opinion, that he who knew the weight of a sceptre would not stoop to pick it up, if he saw it lying before him, so great and painful are the duties incumbent upon a good king. Assuredly it can be no easy task to rule others, when we find it so hard a matter to govern ourselves; and as to dominion, that seems so charming, the frailty of human judgment and the difficulty of choice in things that are new and doubtful considered, I am very much of opinion that it is far more easy and pleasant to follow than to lead; and that it is a great settlement and satisfaction of mind to have only one path to walk in, and to have none to answer for but a man’s self:—

“’Tis much better quietly to obey than wish to rule.”

To which we may add that saying of Cyrus, that no man was fit to rule but he who in his own worth was of greater value than those he was to govern; but King Hiero in Xenophon says further, that in the fruition even of pleasure itself they are in a worse condition than private men; forasmuch as the opportunities and facility they have of commanding those things at will takes off from the delight that ordinary folks enjoy:—

“Love in excess and too palpable turns to weariness, and, like sweetmeats to the stomach, is injurious.”

Can we think that the singing boys of the choir take any great delight in music? the satiety rather renders it troublesome and tedious to them. Feasts, balls, masquerades and tilting delight such as but rarely see, and desire to see, them; but having been frequently at such entertainments, the relish of them grows flat and insipid. Nor do women so much delight those who make a common practice of the sport. He who will not give himself leisure to be thirsty can never find the true pleasure of drinking. Farces and tumbling tricks are pleasant to the spectators, but a wearisome toil to those by whom they are performed. And that this is so, we see that princes divert themselves sometimes in disguising their quality, awhile to depose themselves, and to stoop to the poor and ordinary way of living of the meanest of their people:—

“The rich are often pleased with variety; and the neat supper in a poor cottage, without tapestry and purple, has relaxed the anxious brow.”

Nothing is so distasteful and clogging as abundance. What appetite would not be baffled to see three hundred women at its mercy, as the grand

signor has in his seraglio? And, of his ancestors, what fruition or taste of sport did he reserve to himself, who never went hawking without seven thousand falconers? And besides all this, I fancy that this lustre of grandeur brings with it no little disturbance and uneasiness upon the enjoyment of the most tempting pleasures; the great are too conspicuous and lie too open to every one's view. Neither do I know to what end a man should more require of them to conceal their errors, since what is only reputed indiscretion in us, the people in them brand with the names of tyranny and contempt of the laws, and, besides their proclivity to vice, are apt to hold that it is a heightening of pleasure to them, to insult over and to trample upon public observances. Plato, indeed, in his Gorgias, defines a tyrant to be one who in a city has license to do whatever his own will leads him to do; and by reason of this impunity, the display and publication of their vices do ofttimes more mischief than the vice itself. Every one fears to be pried into and overlooked; but princes are so, even to their very gestures, looks and thoughts, the people conceiving they have right and title to be judges of them: besides that the blemishes of the great naturally appear greater by reason of the eminence and lustre of the place where they are seated, and that a mole or a wart appears greater in them than a wide gash in others. And this is the reason why the poets feign the amours of Jupiter to be performed in the disguises of so many borrowed shapes, and that amongst the many amorous practices they lay to his charge, there is only one, as I remember, where he appears in his own majesty and grandeur.

But let us return to Hiero, who further complains of the inconveniences he found in his royalty, in that he could not look abroad and travel the world at liberty, being as it were a prisoner in the bounds and limits of his own dominion, and that in all his actions he was evermore surrounded with an importunate crowd. And in truth, to see our kings sit all alone at table, environed with so many people prating about them, and so many strangers staring upon them, as they always are, I have often been moved rather to pity than to envy their condition. King Alfonso was wont to say, that in this asses were in a better condition than kings, their masters permitting them to feed at their own ease and pleasure, a favor that kings cannot obtain of their servants. And it has never come into my fancy that it could be of any great benefit to the life of a man of sense to have twenty people prating about him when he is at stool; or that the services of a man of ten thousand livres a year, or that has taken Casale or defended Siena,

should be either more commodious or more acceptable to him, than those of a good groom of the chamber who understands his place. The advantages of sovereignty are in a manner but imaginary: every degree of fortune has in it some image of principality. Caesar calls all the lords of France, having free franchise within their own demesnes, roitelets or petty kings; and in truth, the name of sire excepted, they go pretty far towards kingship; for do but look into the provinces remote from court, as Brittany for example; take notice of the train, the vassals, the officers, the employments, service, ceremony, and state of a lord who lives retired from court in his own house, amongst his own tenants and servants; and observe withal the flight of his imagination; there is nothing more royal; he hears talk of his master once a year, as of a king of Persia, without taking any further recognition of him, than by some remote kindred his secretary keeps in some register. And, to speak the truth, our laws are easy enough, so easy that a gentleman of France scarce feels the weight of sovereignty pinch his shoulders above twice in his life. Real and effectual subjection only concerns such amongst us as voluntarily thrust their necks under the yoke, and who design to get wealth and honors by such services: for a man that loves his own fireside, and can govern his house without falling by the ears with his neighbors or engaging in suits of law, is as free as a Duke of Venice:—

"Servitude enchains few, but many enchain themselves to servitude."

But that which Hiero is most concerned at is, that he finds himself stripped of all friendship, deprived of all mutual society, wherein the true and most perfect fruition of human life consists. For what testimony of affection and goodwill can I extract from him that owes me, whether he will or no, all that he is able to do? Can I form any assurance of his real respect to me, from his humble way of speaking and submissive behavior, when these are ceremonies it is not in his choice to deny? The honor we receive from those that fear us is not honor; those respects are due to royalty and not to me:—

"'Tis the greatest benefit of a kingdom that the people is forced to commend, as well as to bear the acts of the ruler."

Do I not see that the wicked and the good king, he that is hated and he that is beloved, have the one as much reverence paid him as the other? My predecessor was, and my successor shall be, served with the same ceremony and state. If my subjects do me no harm, 'tis no evidence of any good

affection; why should I look upon it as such, seeing it is not in their power to do it if they would? No one follows me or obeys my commands upon the account of any friendship betwixt him and me; there can be no contracting of friendship where there is so little relation and correspondence: my own height has put me out of the familiarity of and intelligence with men: there is too great disparity and disproportion betwixt us. They follow me either upon the account of decency and custom; or rather my fortune, than me, to increase their own. All they say to me or do for me is but outward paint, appearance, their liberty being on all parts restrained by the great power and authority I have over them. I see nothing about me but what is dissembled and disguised.

The Emperor Julian being one day applauded by his courtiers for his exact justice: “I should be proud of these praises,” said he, “did they come from persons that durst condemn or disapprove the contrary, in case I should do it.” All the real advantages of princes are common to them with men of meaner condition (’tis for the gods to mount winged horses and feed upon ambrosia): they have no other sleep, nor other appetite than we, the steel they arm themselves withal is of no better temper than that we also use; their crowns neither defend them from the rain nor the sun.

Diocletian, who wore a crown so fortunate and revered, resigned it to retire to the felicity of a private life; and some time after, the necessity of public affairs requiring that he should reassume his charge, he made answer to those who came to court him to it: “You would not offer,” said he, “to persuade me to this, had you seen the fine order of the trees I have planted in my orchard, and the fair melons I have sown in my garden.”

In Anacharsis’ opinion, the happiest state of government would be where, all other things being equal, precedence should be measured out by the virtues, and repulses by the vices of men.

When King Pyrrhus prepared for his expedition into Italy, his wise counsellor Cyneas, to make him sensible of the vanity of his ambition: “Well, sir,” said he, “to what end do you make all this mighty preparation?”“To make myself master of Italy,” replied the king. “And what after that is done?” said Cyneas. “I will pass over into Gaul and Spain,” said the other. “And what then?”“I will then go to subdue Africa; and lastly, when I have brought the whole world to my subjection, I will sit down and rest content at my own ease.”“For God sake, sir,” replied Cyneas, “tell me what hinders that you may not, if you please, be now in the condition you

speak of? Why do you not now at this instant settle yourself in the state you seem to aim at, and spare all the labor and hazard you interpose?”

“*Forsooth because he does not know what should be the limit of acquisition, and altogether how far real pleasure should increase.”*

I will conclude with an old versicle, that I think very apt to the purpose:—

“*Every man frames his own fortune.”*

OF SUMPTUARY LAWS

THE WAY by which our laws attempt to regulate idle and vain expenses in meat and clothes, seems to be quite contrary to the end designed. The true way would be to beget in men a contempt of silks and gold, as vain, frivolous, and useless; whereas we augment to them the honors, and enhance the value of such things, which, sure, is a very improper way to create a disgust. For to enact that none but princes shall eat turbot, shall wear velvet or gold lace, and interdict these things to the people, what is it but to bring them into a greater esteem, and to set every one more agog to eat and wear them? Let kings leave off these ensigns of grandeur; they have others enough besides; those excesses are more excusable in any other than a prince. We may learn by the example of several nations better ways of exterior distinction of quality (which, truly, I conceive to be very requisite in a state) enough, without fostering to this purpose such corruption and manifest inconvenience. ’Tis strange how suddenly and with how much ease custom in these indifferent things establishes itself and becomes authority. We had scarce worn cloth a year, in compliance with the court, for the mourning of Henry II., but that silks were already grown into such contempt with every one, that a man so clad was presently concluded a citizen: silks were divided betwixt the physicians and surgeons, and though all other people almost went in the same habit, there was, notwithstanding, in one thing or other, sufficient distinction of the several conditions of men. How suddenly do greasy chamois and linen doublets become the fashion in our armies, whilst all neatness and richness of habit fall into contempt? Let kings but lead the dance and begin to leave off this expense, and in a month the business will be done throughout the kingdom, without edict or ordinance; we shall all follow. It should be rather proclaimed, on the contrary, that no one should wear scarlet or goldsmiths’ work but courtesans and tumblers.

Seleucus by the like invention reclaimed the corrupted manners of the Locrians. His laws were, that no free woman should be allowed any more than one maid to follow her, unless she was drunk: nor was to stir out of the city by night, wear jewels of gold about her, or go in an embroidered robe, unless she was a professed and public prostitute; that, bravos excepted, no man was to wear a gold ring, nor be seen in one of those effeminate robes

woven in the city of Miletus. By which infamous exceptions he discreetly diverted his citizens from superfluities and pernicious pleasures, and it was a project of great utility to attract men by honor and ambition to their duty and obedience.

Our kings can do what they please in such external reformations; their own inclination stands in this case for a law:—

"What princes themselves do, they seem to prescribe."

Whatever is done at court passes for a rule through the rest of France. Let the courtiers fall out with these abominable breeches, that discover so much of those parts should be concealed; these great bellied doublets, that make us look like I know not what, and are so unfit to admit of arms; these long effeminate locks of hair; this foolish custom of kissing what we present to our equals, and our hands in saluting them, a ceremony in former times only due to princes. Let them not permit that a gentleman shall appear in place of respect without his sword, unbuttoned and untrussed, as though he came from the house of office; and that, contrary to the custom of our forefathers and the particular privilege of the nobles of this kingdom, we stand a long time bare to them in what place soever, and the same to a hundred others, so many tiercelets and quartelets of kings we have got nowadays and other like vicious innovations: they will see them all presently vanish and cried down. These are, 'tis true, but superficial errors; but they are of ill augury, and enough to inform us that the whole fabric is crazy and tottering, when we see the roughcast of our walls to cleave and split.

Plato in his Laws esteems nothing of more pestiferous consequence to his city than to give young men the liberty of introducing any change in their habits, gestures, dances, songs, and exercises, from one form to another; shifting from this to that, hunting after novelties, and applauding the inventors; by which means manners are corrupted and the old institutions come to be nauseated and despised. In all things, saving only in those that are evil, a change is to be feared; even the change of seasons, winds, viands, and humors. And no laws are in their true credit, but such to which God has given so long a continuance that no one knows their beginning, or that there ever was any other.

Sleeping. From painting by C.E. Perugini.

OF SLEEPING.

REASON DIRECTS that we should always go the same way, but not always at the same pace. And, consequently, though a wise man ought not so much to give the reins to human passions as to let him deviate from the right path, he may, notwithstanding, without prejudice to his duty, leave it to them to hasten or to slacken his speed, and not fix himself like a motionless and insensible Colossus. Could virtue itself put on flesh and blood, I believe the pulse would beat faster going on to an assault than in going to dinner: that is to say, there is a necessity she should heat and be moved upon this account. I have taken notice, as of an extraordinary thing, of some great men, who in the highest enterprises and most important affairs have kept themselves in so settled and serene a calm, as not at all to break their sleep. Alexander the Great, on the day assigned for that furious battle betwixt him and Darius, slept so profoundly and so long in the morning, that Parmenio was forced to enter his chamber, and coming to his bedside, to call him several times by his name, the time to go to fight compelling him so to do. The Emperor Otho, having put on a resolution to kill himself that night, after having settled his domestic affairs, divided his money amongst his servants, and set a good edge upon a sword he had made choice of for the purpose, and now staying only to be satisfied whether all his friends had retired in safety, he fell into so sound a sleep that the gentlemen of his chamber heard him snore. The death of this emperor has in it circumstances paralleling that of the great Cato, and particularly this just related: for Cato being ready to despatch himself, whilst he only stayed his hand in expectation of the return of a messenger he had sent to bring him news whether the senators he had sent away were put out from the port of Utica, he fell into so sound a sleep, that they heard him snore in the next room; and the man, whom he had sent to the port, having awakened him to let him know that the tempestous weather had hindered the senators from putting to sea, he despatched away another messenger, and composing again himself in the bed, settled to sleep, and slept till by the return of the last messenger he had certain intelligence they were gone. We may here further compare him, with Alexander in the great and dangerous storm that threatened him by the sedition of the tribune Metellus, who, attempting to publish a decree for the calling in of Pompey with his army into the city at the time of

Catiline’s conspiracy, was only and that stoutly opposed by Cato, so that very sharp language and bitter menaces passed betwixt them in the senate about that affair; but it was the next day, in the forenoon, that the controversy was to be decided, where Metellus, besides the favor of the people and of Caesar—at that time of Pompey’s faction— was to appear accompanied with a rabble of slaves and gladiators; and Cato only fortified with his own courage and constancy; so that his relations, domestics, and many virtuous people of his friends were in great apprehensions for him; and to that degree, that some there were who passed over the whole night without sleep, eating, or drinking, for the danger they saw him running into; his wife and sisters did nothing but weep and torment themselves in his house; whereas, he, on the contrary, comforted every one, and after having supped after his usual manner, went to bed, and slept profoundly till morning, when one of his fellow-tribunes roused him to go to the encounter. The knowledge we have of the greatness of this man’s courage by the rest of his life, may warrant us certainly to judge that his indifference proceeded from a soul so much elevated above such accidents, that he disdained to let it take any more hold of his fancy than any ordinary incident.

In the naval engagement that Augustus won of Sextus Pompeius in Sicily, just as they were to begin the fight, he was so fast asleep that his friends were compelled to wake him to give the signal of battle: and this was it that gave Mark Antony afterwards occasion to reproach him that he had not the courage so much as with open eyes to behold the order of his own squadrons, and not to have dared to present himself before the soldiers, till first Agrippa had brought him news of the victory obtained. But as to the young Marius, who did much worse (for the day of his last battle against Sylla, after he had marshalled his army and given the word and signal of battle, he laid him down under the shade of a tree to repose himself, and fell so fast asleep that the rout and flight of his men could hardly waken him, he having seen nothing of the fight), he is said to have been at that time so extremely spent and worn out with labor and want of sleep, that nature could hold out no longer. Now, upon what has been said, the physicians may determine whether sleep be so necessary that our lives depend upon it: for we read that King Perseus of Macedon, being prisoner at Rome, was killed by being kept from sleep; but Pliny instances such as have lived long without sleep. Herodotus speaks of nations where the men sleep and wake

by half-years, and they who write the life of the sage Epimenides affirm that he slept seven-and-fifty years together.

OF THE BATTLE OF DREUX

OUR BATTLE of Dreux is remarkable for several extraordinary incidents; but such as have no great kindness for M. de Guise, nor much favor his reputation, are willing to have him thought to blame, and that his making a halt and delaying time with the forces he commanded, whilst the Constable, who was general of the army, was racked through and through with the enemy's artillery, his battalion routed, and himself taken prisoner, is not to be excused; and that he had much better have run the hazard of charging the enemy in flank, than staying for the advantage of falling in upon the rear, to suffer so great and so important a loss. But, besides what the event demonstrated, he who will consider it without passion or prejudice will easily be induced to confess that the aim and design, not of a captain only, but of every private soldier, ought to regard the victory in general, and that no particular occurrences, how nearly soever they may concern his own interest, should divert him from that pursuit. Philopoemen, in an encounter with Machanidas, having sent before a good strong party of his archers and slingers to begin the skirmish, and these being routed and hotly pursued by the enemy, who, pushing on the fortune of their arms, and in that pursuit passing by the battalion where Philopoemen was, though his soldiers were impatient to fall on, he did not think fit to stir from his post nor to present himself to the enemy to relieve his men, but having suffered these to be chased and cut in pieces before his face, charged in upon the enemy's foot when he saw them left unprotected by the horse, and notwithstanding that they were Lacedaemonians, yet taking them in the nick, when thinking themselves secure of the victory, they began to disorder their ranks; he did this business with great facility, and then put himself in pursuit of Machanidas. Which case is very like that of Monsieur de Guise.

In that bloody battle betwixt Agesilaus and the Boeotians, which Xenophon, who was present at it, reports to be the sharpest that he had ever seen, Agesilaus waived the advantage that fortune presented him, to let the Boeotian battalions pass by and then to charge them in the rear, how certain soever he might make himself of the victory, judging it would rather be an effect of conduct than valor, to proceed that way; and therefore, to show his prowess, rather chose with a marvellous ardor of courage to charge them in the front; but he was well beaten and well wounded for his pains, and

constrained at last to disengage himself, and to take the course he had at first neglected; opening his battalion to give way to this torrent of Boeotians, and they being passed by, taking notice that they marched in disorder, like men who thought themselves out of danger, he pursued and charged them in flank; yet could not so prevail as to bring it to so general a rout but that they leisurely retreated, still facing about upon him till they had retired to safety.

OF NAMES

WHAT VARIETY of herbs soever are shuffled together in the dish, yet the whole mass is swallowed up under one name of a sallet. In like manner, under the consideration of names, I will make a gallimaufry of divers articles.

Every nation has certain names, that, I know not why, are taken in no good sense, as with us, John, William, Benedict. In the genealogy of princes, also, there seem to be certain names fatally affected, as the Ptolemi of Egypt, the Henries in England, the Charleses in France, the Baldwins in Flanders, and the Williams of our ancient Aquitaine, from whence, ’tis said, the name of Guyenne has its derivation; which would seem far fetched were there not as crude derivations in Plato himself.

Item, ’tis a frivolous thing in itself, but nevertheless worthy to be recorded for the strangeness of it, that is written by an eyewitness, that Henry, Duke of Normandy, son of Henry II., king of England, making a great feast in France, the concourse of nobility and gentry was so great, that being, for sport’s sake, divided into troops, according to their names, in the first troop, which consisted of Williams, there were found a hundred and ten knights sitting at the table of that name, without reckoning the ordinary gentlemen and servants.

It is as pleasant to distinguish the tables by the names of the guests as it was in the Emperor Geta to distinguish the several courses of his meat by the first letters of the meats themselves; so that those that began with B were served up together, as brawn, beef, bream, bustards, beccaficos; and so of the others. Item, there is a saying that it is a good thing to have a good name, that is to say, credit and a good repute; but besides this, it is really convenient to have a well-sounding name, such as is easy of pronunciation and easy to be remembered, by reason that kings and other great persons do by that means the more easily know and the more hardly forget us; and indeed of our own servants we more frequently call and employ those whose names are most ready upon the tongue. I myself have seen Henry II., when he could not for his heart hit of a gentleman’s name of our country of Gascony, and moreover was fain to call one of the queen’s maids of honor by the general name of her race, her own family name being so difficult to

pronounce or remember; and Socrates thinks it worthy a father's care to give fine names to his children.

Item, 'tis said that the foundation of Notre Dame la Grande at Poitiers took its original from hence: that a debauched young fellow formerly living in that place, having got to him a wench, and, at her first coming in, asking her name, and being answered that it was Mary, he felt himself so suddenly pierced through with the awe of religion and the reverence to that sacred name of the Blessed Virgin, that he not only immediately sent the girl away, but became a reformed man and so continued the remainder of his life; and that, in consideration of this miracle, there was erected upon the place where this young man's house stood, first a chapel dedicated to our Lady and afterwards the church that we now see standing there. This vocal and auricular reproof wrought upon the conscience, and that right into the soul; this that follows, insinuated itself merely by the senses. Pythagoras being in company with some wild young fellows, and perceiving that, heated with the feast, they comploted to go violate an honest house, commanded the singing wench to alter her wanton airs; and by a solemn, grave, and spondaic music, gently enchanted and laid asleep their ardor.

Item, will not posterity say that our modern reformation has been wonderfully delicate and exact, in having not only combated errors and vices, and filled the world with devotion, humility, obedience, peace, and all sorts of virtue, but in having proceeded so far as to quarrel with our ancient baptismal names of Charles, Louis, Francis, to fill the world with Methuselahs, Ezekiels, and Malachis, names of a more spiritual sound? A gentleman, a neighbor of mine, a great admirer of antiquity, and who was always extolling the excellences of former times in comparison with this present age of ours, did not, amongst the rest, forget to dwell upon the lofty and magnificent sound of the gentlemen's names of those days, Don Grumedan, Quedregan, Agesilan, which but to hear named he conceived to denote other kind of men than Pierre, Guillot, and Michel.

Item, I am mightily pleased with Jacques Amyot for leaving, throughout a whole French oration, the Latin names entire, without varying and garbling them to give them a French cadence. It seemed a little harsh and rough at first; but already custom, by the authority of his Plutarch, has overcome that novelty. I have often wished that such as write histories in Latin would leave our names as they find them and as they are; for in making Vaudemond into Vallemontanus, and metamorphosing names to

make them suit better with the Greek or Latin, we know not where we are, and with the persons of the men lose the benefit of the story.

To conclude, ’tis a scurvy custom and of very ill consequence that we have in our kingdom of France to call every one by the name of his manor or seigneury; ’tis the thing in the world that the most prejudices and confounds families and descents. A younger brother of a good family, having a manor left him by his father, by the name of which he has been known and honored, cannot handsomely leave it; ten years after his decease it falls into the hand of a stranger, who does the same: do but judge whereabouts we shall be concerning the knowledge of these men. We need look no further for examples than our own royal family, where every partition creates a new surname, whilst, in the meantime, the original of the family is totally lost. There is so great liberty taken in these mutations, that I have not in my time seen any one advanced by fortune to any extraordinary condition who has not presently had genealogical titles added to him, new and unknown to his father, and who has not been inoculated into some illustrious stem by good-luck; and the obscurest families are the most apt for falsification. How many gentlemen have we in France who by their own account are of royal extraction? more, I think, than who will confess they are not. Was it not a pleasant passage of a friend of mine? There were several gentlemen assembled together about the dispute of one seigneur with another; which other had, in truth, some pre-eminence of titles and alliances above the ordinary gentry. Upon the debate of this prerogative, every one, to make himself equal to him, alleged, this one extraction, that another; this, the near resemblance of name, that, of arms; another, an old worm-eaten patent; the very least of them was great-grandchild to some foreign king. When they came to sit down to dinner, my friend, instead of taking his place amongst them, retiring with most profound conges, entreated the company to excuse him for having hitherto lived with them at the saucy rate of a companion; but being now better informed of their quality, he would begin to pay them the respect due to their birth and grandeur, and that it would ill become him to sit down among so many princes—ending this farce with a thousand reproaches: “Let us, in God’s name, satisfy ourselves with what our fathers were contented with, with what we are. We are great enough, if we rightly understand how to maintain it. Let us not disown the fortune and condition of our ancestors, and let us

lay aside these ridiculous pretences, that can never be wanting to any one that has the impudence to allege them."

Arms have no more security than surnames. I bear azure powdered with trefoils or, with a lion's paw of the same armed gules in fesse. What privilege has this to continue particularly in my house? A son-in-law will transport it into another family, or some paltry purchaser will make them his first arms. There is nothing wherein there is more change and confusion.

But this consideration leads me, perforce, into another subject. Let us pry a little narrowly into, and, in God's name, examine upon what foundation we erect this glory and reputation for which the world is turned topsyturvy: wherein do we place this renown that we hunt after with so much pains? It is, in the end, Peter or William that carries it, takes it into his possession, and whom it only concerns. O what a valiant faculty is hope, that in a mortal subject, and in a moment, makes nothing of usurping infinity, immensity, eternity, and of supplying its master's indigence, at its pleasure, with all things he can imagine or desire! Nature has given us this passion for a pretty toy to play withal. And this Peter or William, what is it but a sound, when all is done? or three or four dashes with a pen, so easy to be varied that I would fain know to whom is to be attributed the glory of so many victories, to Guesquin, to Glesquin, or to Gueaquin? and yet there would be something of greater moment in the case than in Lucian, that Sigma should serve Tau with a process; for

"They aim at no slight or jocular rewards;"

the chase is there in very good earnest: the question is, which of these letters is to be rewarded for so many sieges, battles, wounds, imprisonments, and services done to the crown of France by this famous constable?

Nicholas Denisot never concerned himself further than the letters of his name, of which he has altered the whole contexture to build up by anagram the Count d'Alsinois, whom he has handsomely endowed with the glory of his poetry and painting. The historian Suetonius was satisfied with only the meaning of his name, which made him cashier his father's surname, Lenis, to leave Tranquillus successor to the reputation of his writings. Who would believe that Captain Bayard should have no honor but what he derives from the deeds of Peter Terrail; and that Antonio Iscalin should suffer himself to his face to be robbed of the honor of so many navigators and commands at sea and land by Captain Paulin and the Baron

de la Garde? Secondly, these are dashes of the pen conmon to a thousand people. How many are there, in every family, of the same name and surname? and how many more in several families, ages, and countries? History tells us of three of the name of Socrates, of five Platos, of eight Aristotles, of seven Xenophons, of twenty Demetrii, and of twenty Theodores; and how many more she was not acquainted with we may imagine. Who hinders my groom from calling himself Pompey the Great? But after all, what virtue, what authority, or what secret springs are there that fix upon my deceased groom, or the other Pompey, who had his head cut off in Egypt, this glorious renown, and these so much honored flourishes of the pen, so as to be of any advantage to them?

> *"Do you believe the buried ashes and names regard such things?"*

What sense have the two companions in greatest esteem amongst me, Epaminondas, of this fine verse that has been so many ages current in his praise:—

> *"The glory of the Spartans is extinguished by my plans;"*

or Africanus, of this other:—

> *"From where the sun rises over the Palus Maeotis, to where it sets, there is no one whose acts can compare with mine."*

Survivors indeed tickle themselves with these fine phrases, and by them incited to jealousy and desire, inconsiderately and according to their own fancy, attribute to the dead this their own feeling, vainly flattering themselves that they shall one day in turn be capable of the same character. However:—

> *"For these the Roman, the Greek, and the Barbarian commander hath aroused himself; he has incurred thence causes of danger and toil: so much greater is the thirst for fame than for virtue."*

OF THE UNCERTAINTY OF OUR JUDGMENT.

WELL SAYS this verse:—

"There is everywhere much liberty of speech."

For example:—

"Hannibal conquered, but knew not how to make the best use of his victorious venture."

Such as would improve this argument, and condemn the oversight of our leaders in not pushing home the victory at Moncontour, or accuse the King of Spain of not knowing how to make the best use of the advantage he had against us at St. Quentin, may conclude these oversights to proceed from a soul already drunk with success, or from a spirit which, being full and overgorged with this beginning of good fortune, had lost the appetite of adding to it, already having enough to do to digest what it had taken in: he has his arms full, and can embrace no more: unworthy of the benefit fortune has conferred upon him and the advantage she had put into his hands: for what utility does he reap from it, if, notwithstanding, he give his enemy respite to rally and make head against him? What hope is there that he will dare at another time to attack an enemy reunited and recomposed, and armed anew with anger and revenge, who did not dare to pursue them when routed and unmanned by fear?

"Whilst fortune is fresh, and terror finishes all."

But withal, what better opportunity can he expect than that he has lost? 'Tis not here, as in fencing, where the most hits gain the prize; for so long as the enemy is on foot, the game is new to begin, and that is not to be called a victory that puts not an end to the war. In the encounter where Caesar had the worst, near the city of Oricum, he reproached Pompey's soldiers that he had been lost had their general known how to overcome; and afterwards clawed him in a very different fashion when it came to his turn.

But why may not a man also argue, on the contrary, that it is the effect of a precipitous and insatiate spirit not to know how to bound and restrain its coveting; that it is to abuse the favors of God to exceed the measure He has prescribed them: and that again to throw a man's self into danger after a victory obtained is again to expose himself to the mercy of fortune: that it is one of the greatest discretions in the rule of war not to drive an enemy to

despair? Sylla and Marius in the social war, having defeated the Marsians, seeing yet a body of reserve that, prompted by despair, was coming on like enraged brutes to dash in upon them, thought it not convenient to stand their charge. Had not Monsieur de Foix's ardor transported him so furiously to pursue the remains of the victory of Ravenna, he had not obscured it by his own death. And yet the recent memory of his example served to preserve Monsieur d'Anguien from the same misfortune at the battle of Serisoles. 'Tis dangerous to attack a man you have deprived of all means to escape but by his arms, for necessity teaches violent resolutions:—

"Irritated necessity bites deepest."

"He is not readily beaten who provokes the enemy by showing his throat."

This was it that made Pharax withhold the King of Lacedaemon, who had won a battle against the Mantineans, from going to charge a thousand Argians, who had escaped in an entire body from the defeat, but rather let them steal off at liberty that he might not encounter valor whetted and enraged by mischance. Clodomir, king of Aquitaine, after his victory pursuing Gondemar, king of Burgundy, beaten and making off as fast as he could for safety, compelled him to face about and make head, wherein his obstinacy deprived him of the fruit of his conquest, for he there lost his life.

In like manner, if a man were to choose whether he would have his soldiers richly and sumptuously accoutred or armed only for the necessity of the matter in hand, this argument would step in to favor the first, of which opinion was Sertorius, Philopoemen, Brutus, Caesar, and others, that it is to a soldier an enflaming of courage and a spur to glory to see himself in brave attire; and withal a motive to be more obstinate in fight, having his arms, which are in a manner his estate and whole inheritance to defend; which is the reason, says Xenophon, why those of Asia carried their wives and concubines, with their choicest jewels and greatest wealth, along with them to the wars. But then these arguments would be as ready to stand up for the other side; that a general ought rather to lessen in his men their solicitude of preserving themselves than to increase it; that by such means they will be in a double fear of hazarding their persons, as it will be a double temptation to the enemy to fight with greater resolution where so great booty and so rich spoils are to be obtained; and this very thing has been observed in former times, notably to encourage the Romans against the Samnites. Antiochus, showing Hannibal the army he had raised,

wonderfully splendid and rich in all sorts of equipage, asked him if the Romans would be satisfied with that army? “Satisfied,” replied the other, “yes, doubtless, were their avarice never so great.” Lycurgus not only forbade his soldiers all manner of bravery in their equipage, but, moreover, to strip their conquered enemies, because he would, as he said, that poverty and frugality should shine with the rest of the battle.

At sieges and elsewhere, where occasion draws us near to the enemy, we willingly suffer our men to brave, rate, and affront him with all sorts of injurious language; and not without some color of reason: for it is of no little consequence to take from them all hopes of mercy and composition, by representing to them that there is no fair quarter to be expected from an enemy they have incensed to that degree, nor other remedy remaining but in victory. And yet Vitellius found himself deceived in this way of proceeding; for having to do with Otho, weaker in the valor of his soldiers, long unaccustomed to war and effeminated with the delights of the city, he so nettled them at last with injurious language, reproaching them with cowardice and regret for the mistresses and entertainments they had left behind at Rome, that by this means he inspired them with such resolution as no exhortation had had the power to have done, and himself made them fall upon him, with whom their own captains before could by no means prevail. And, indeed, when they are injuries that touch to the quick, it may very well fall out that he who went but unwillingly to work in the behalf of his prince will fall to ’t with another sort of mettle when the quarrel is his own.

Considering of how great importance is the preservation of the general of an army, and that the universal aim of an enemy is levelled directly at the head, upon which all the others depend, the course seems to admit of no dispute, which we know has been taken by so many great captains, of changing their habit and disguising their persons upon the point of going to engage. Nevertheless, the inconvenience a man by so doing runs into is not less than that he thinks to avoid; for the captain, by this means being concealed from the knowledge of his own men, the courage they should derive from his presence and example happens by degrees to cool and to decay; and not seeing the wonted marks and ensigns of their leader, they presently conclude him either dead, or that, despairing of the business, he is gone to shift for himself. And experience shows us that both these ways have been successful and otherwise. What befell Pyrrhus in the battle he fought against the Consul Levinus in Italy will serve us to both purposes;

for though by shrouding his person under the armor of Megacles and making him wear his own, he undoubtedly preserved his own life, yet, by that very means, he was withal very near running into the other mischief of losing the battle. Alexander, Caesar, and Lucullus loved to make themselves known in a battle by rich accoutrements and armor of a particular lustre and color: Agis, Agesilaus, and that great Gilippus, on the contrary, used to fight obscurely armed, and without any imperial attendance or distinction.

Amongst other oversights Pompey is charged withal at the battle of Pharsalia, he is condemned for making his army stand still to receive the enemy's charge; by "reason that" (I shall here steal Plutarch's own words, which are better than mine) "he by so doing deprived himself of the violent impression the motion of running adds to the first shock of arms, and hindered that clashing of the combatants against one another which is wont to give them greater impetuosity and fury; especially when they come to rush in with their utmost vigor, their courages increasing by the shouts and the career; 'tis to render the soldiers' ardor, as a man may say, more reserved and cold." This is what he says. But if Caesar had come by the worse, why might it not as well have been urged by another, that, on the contrary, the strongest and most steady posture of fighting is that wherein a man stands planted firm without motion; and that they who are steady upon the march, closing up, and reserving their force within themselves for the push of the business, have a great advantage against those who are disordered, and who have already spent half their breath in running on precipitately to the charge? Besides that an army is a body made up of so many individua members, it is impossible for it to move in this fury with so exact a motion as not to break the order of battle, and that the best of them are not engaged before their fellows can come on to help them. In that unnatural battle betwixt the two Persian brothers, the Lacedaemonian Clearchus, who commanded the Greeks of Cyrus' party, led them on softly and without precipitation to the charge; but, coming within fifty paces, hurried them on full speed, hoping in so short a career both to keep their order and to husband their breath, and at the same time to give the advantage of impetuosity and impression both to their persons and their missile arms. Others have regulated this question as to their armies thus: if your enemy come full drive upon you, stand firm to receive him; if he stand to receive you, run full drive upon him.

In the expedition of the Emperor Charles V. into Provence, King Francis was put to choose either to go meet him in Italy or to await him in his own dominions; wherein, though he very well considered of how great advantage it was to preserve his own territory entire and clear from the troubles of war, to the end that, being unexhausted of its stores, it might continually supply men and money at need; that the necessity of war requires at every turn to spoil and lay waste the country before us, which cannot very well be done upon one's own; to which may be added, that the country people do not so easily digest such a havoc by those of their own party as from an enemy, so that seditions and commotions might by such means be kindled amongst us; that the license of pillage and plunder (which are not to be tolerated at home) is a great ease and refreshment against the fatigues and sufferings of war; and that he who has no other prospect of gain than his bare pay will hardly be kept from running home, being but two steps from his wife and his own house; that he who lays the cloth is ever at the charge of the feast; that there is more alacrity in assaulting than defending; and that the shock of a battle's loss in our own bowels is so violent as to endanger the disjointing of the whole body, there being no passion so contagious as that of fear, that is so easily believed, or that so suddenly diffuses itself; and that the cities that should hear the rattle of this tempest at their gates, that should take in their captains and soldiers yet trembling and out of breath, would be in danger in this heat and hurry to precipitate themselves upon some untoward resolution: notwithstanding all this, so it was that he chose to recall the forces he had beyond the mountains and to suffer the enemy to come to him. For he might, on the other hand, imagine that, being at home and amongst friends, he could not fail of plenty of all manner of conveniences; the rivers and passes he had at his devotion would bring him in both provisions and money in all security, and without the trouble of convoy; that he should find his subjects by so much the more affectionate to him, by how much their danger was more near and pressing; that having so many cities and barriers to secure him, it would be in his power to give the law of battle at his own opportunity and advantage; and that, if it pleased him to delay the time, under cover and at his ease he might see his enemy founder and defeat himself with the difficulties he was certain to encounter, being engaged in a hostile country, where before, behind, and on every side war would be made upon him; no means to refresh himself or to enlarge his quarters, should diseases infest

them, or to lodge his wounded men in safety; no money, no victuals, but at the point of the lance; no leisure to repose and take breath; no knowledge of the ways or country to secure him from ambushes and surprises; and in case of losing a battle, no possible means of saving the remains. Neither is there want of example in both these cases.

Scipio thought it much better to go and attack his enemy's territories in Africa than to stay at home to defend his own and to fight him in Italy, and it succeeded well with him. But, on the contrary, Hannibal in the same war ruined himself by abandoning the conquest of a foreign country to go and defend his own. The Athenians having left the enemy in their own dominions to go over into Sicily, were not favored by fortune in their design; but Agathocles, king of Syracuse, found her favorable to him when he went over into Africa and left the war at home.

By which examples we are wont to conclude, and with some reason, that events, especially in war, for the most part depend upon fortune, who will not be governed by nor submit unto human reasons and prudence, according to the poet:—

> *"And there is value in ill counsel: prudence deceives: nor does fortune inquire into causes, nor aid the most deserving, but turns hither and thither without discrimination. Indeed there is a greater power which directs and rules us, and brings mortal affairs under its own laws."*

But, to take the thing right, it should seem that our counsels and deliberations depend as much upon fortune as anything else we do, and that she engages also our arguments in her uncertainty and confusion. "We argue rashly and adventurously," says Timaeus in Plato, "by reason that, as well as ourselves, our discourses have great participation in the temerity of chance."

OF DESTRIERS

I HERE have become a grammarian, I who never learned any language but by rote, and who do not yet know adjective, conjunction, or ablative. I think I have read that the Romans had a sort of horses by them called funales or dextrarios, which were either led horses, or horses laid on at several stages to be taken fresh upon occasion, and thence it is that we call our horses of service destriers; and our romances commonly use the phrase of adestrer for accompagner, to accompany. They also called those that were trained in such sort, that running full speed, side by side, without bridle or saddle, the Roman gentlemen, armed at all pieces, would shift and throw themselves from one to the other, desultorios equos. The Numidian men-at-arms had always a led horse in one hand, besides that they rode upon, to change in the heat of battle:—

> *"To whom it was a custom, leading along two horses, often in the hottest fight, to leap armed from a tired horse to a fresh one; so active were the men, and the horses so docile."*

There are many horses trained to help their riders so as to run upon any one that appears with a drawn sword, to fall both with mouth and heels upon any that front or oppose them: but it often happens that they do more harm to their friends than to their enemies; and, moreover, you cannot loose them from their hold, to reduce them again into order, when they are once engaged and grappled, by which means you remain at the mercy of their quarrel. It happened very ill to Artybius, general of the Persian army, fighting, man to man, with Onesilus, king of Salamis, to be mounted upon a horse trained after this manner, it being the occasion of his death, the squire of Onesilus cleaving the horse down with a scythe betwixt the shoulders as it was reared up upon his master. And what the Italians report, that in the battle of Fornova, the horse of Charles VIII., with kicks and plunges, disengaged his master from the enemy that pressed upon him, without which he had been slain, sounds like a very great chance, if it be true. The Mamalukes make their boast that they have the most ready horses of any cavalry in the world; that by nature and custom they were taught to know and distinguish the enemy, and to fall foul upon them with mouth and heels, according to a word or sign given; as also to gather up with their teeth darts and lances scattered upon the field, and present them to their riders, on the

word of command. ’Tis said, both of Caesar and Pompey, that amongst their other excellent qualities they were both very good horsemen, and particularly of Caesar, that in his youth, being mounted on the bare back, without saddle or bridle, he could make the horse run, stop, and turn, and perform all its airs, with his hands behind him. As nature designed to make of this person, and of Alexander, two miracles of military art, so one would say she had done her utmost to arm them after an extraordinary manner: for every one knows that Alexander’s horse, Bucephalus, had a head inclining to the shape of a bull; but he would suffer himself to be mounted and governed by none but his master, and that he was so honored after his death as to have a city erected to his name. Caesar had also one which had forefeet like those of a man, his hoofs being divided in the form of fingers, which likewise was not to be ridden by any but Caesar himself, who, after his death, dedicated his statue to the goddess Venus.

I do not willingly alight when I am once on horseback, for it is the place where, whether well or sick, I find myself most at ease. Plato recommends it for health, as also Pliny says it is good for the stomach and the joints. Let us go further into this matter since here we are.

We read in Xenophon a law forbidding any one who was master of a horse to travel on foot. Trogus Pompeius and Justin say that the Parthians were wont to perform all offices and ceremonies, not only in war but also all affairs whether public or private, make bargains, confer, entertain, take the air, and all on horseback; and that the greatest distinction betwixt freemen and slaves amongst them was that the one rode on horseback and the other went on foot, an institution of which King Cyrus was the founder.

There are several examples in the Roman history (and Suetonius more particularly observes it of Caesar) of captains who, on pressing occasions, commanded their cavalry to alight, both by that means to take from them all hopes of flight, as also for the advantage they hoped in this sort of fight.

“Wherein the Roman does questionless excel,”

says Livy. And so the first thing they did to prevent the mutinies and insurrections of nations of late conquest was to take from them their arms and horses, and therefore it is that we so often met in Caesar—

> “*He commanded the arms to be produced, the horses brought out, hostages to be given.*”

The Grand Signior to this day suffers not a Christian or a Jew to keep a horse of his own throughout his empire.

Our ancestors, and especially at the time they had war with the English, in all their greatest engagements and pitched battles fought for the most part on foot, that they might have nothing but their own force, courage, and constancy to trust to in a quarrel of so great concern as life and honor. You stake (whatever Chrysanthes in Xenophon says to the contrary) your valor and your fortune upon that of your horse; his wounds or death bring your person into the same danger; his fear or fury shall make you reputed rash or cowardly; if he have an ill mouth or will not answer to the spur, your honor must answer for it. And, therefore, I do not think it strange that those battles were more firm and furious than those that are fought on horseback:—

"They fought and fell pell-mell, victors and vanquished; nor was flight thought of by either."

Their battles were much better disputed. Nowadays there are nothing but routs:—

"The first shout and charge decides the business."

And the means we choose to make use of in so great a hazard should be as much as possible at our own command: wherefore I should advise to choose weapons of the shortest sort, and such of which we are able to give the best account. A man may repose more confidence in a sword he holds in his hand than in a bullet he discharges out of a pistol, wherein there must be a concurrence of several circumstances to make it perform its office, the powder, the stone, and the wheel: if any of which fail it endangers your fortune. A man himself strikes much surer than the air can direct his blow:—

"And, so where they choose to carry (the arrows), the winds allow the wounds; the sword has strength of arm: and whatever nation of men there is, they wage war with swords."

But of that weapon I shall speak more fully when I come to compare the arms of the ancients with those of modern use; only, by the way, the astonishment of the ear abated, which every one grows familiar with in a short time, I look upon it as a weapon of very little execution, and hope we shall one day lay it aside. That missile weapon which the Italians formerly made use of both with fire and by sling was much more terrible: they called a certain kind of javelin, armed at the point with an iron three feet long, that it might pierce through and through an armed man, Phalarica, which they sometimes in the field darted by hand, sometimes from several sorts of

engines for the defence of beleaguered places; the shaft being rolled round with flax, wax, rosin, oil, and other combustible matter, took fire in its flight, and lighting upon the body of a man or his target, took away all the use of arms and limbs. And yet, coming to close fight, I should think they would also damage the assailant, and that the camp being as it were planted with these flaming truncheons, would produce a common inconvenience to the whole crowd:—

"The Phalarica, launched like lightning, flies through the air with a loud rushing sound."

They had, moreover, other devices which custom made them perfect in (which seem incredible to us who have not seen them), by which they supplied the effects of our powder and shot. They darted their spears with so great force, as ofttimes to transfix two targets and two armed men at once, and pin them together. Neither was the effect of their slings less certain of execution or of shorter carriage: —

"Culling round stones from the beach for their slings; and with these practising over the waves, so as from a great distance to throw within a very small circuit, they became able not only to wound an enemy in the head, but hit any other part at pleasure."

Their pieces of battery had not only the execution but the thunder of our cannon also:—

"At the battery of the walls, performed with a terrible noise, the defenders began to fear and tremble."

The Gauls, our kinsmen in Asia, abominated these treacherous missile arms, it being their use to fight, with greater bravery, hand to hand:—

"They are not so much concerned about large gashes—the bigger and deeper the wound, the more glorious do they esteem the combat: but when they find themselves tormented by some arrow-head or bullet lodged within, but presenting little outward show of wound, transported with shame and anger to perish by so imperceptible a destroyer, they fall to the ground."

A pretty description of something very like an arquebuse-shot. The ten thousand Greeks in their long and famous retreat met with a nation who very much galled them with great and strong bows, carrying arrows so long that, taking them up, one might return them back like a dart, and with them pierce a buckler and an armed man through and through. The engines, that Dionysius invented at Syracuse to shoot vast massy darts and stones of a

prodigious greatness with so great impetuosity and at so great a distance, came very near to our modern inventions.

But in this discourse of horses and horsemanship, we are not to forget the pleasant posture of one Maistre Pierre Pol, a doctor of divinity, upon his mule, whom Monstrelet reports always to have ridden sideways through the streets of Paris like a woman. He says also, elsewhere, that the Gascons had terrible horses, that would wheel in their full speed, which the French, Picards, Flemings, and Brabanters looked upon as a miracle, “having never seen the like before,” which are his very words.

Caesar, speaking of the Suabians: “in the charges they make on horseback,” says he, “they often throw themselves off to fight on foot, having taught their horses not to stir in the meantime from the place, to which they presently run again upon occasion; and according to their custom, nothing is so unmanly and so base as to use saddles or pads, and they despise such as make use of those conveniences: insomuch that, being but a very few in number, they fear not to attack a great many.” That which I have formerly wondered at, to see a horse made to perform all his airs with a switch only and the reins upon his neck, was common with the Massilians, who rid their horses without saddle or bridle:—

> “*The Massilians, mounted on the bare backs of their horses, brideless, guide them by a mere switch.*”
>
> “*The Numidians guiding their horses without bridles.*”
>
> “*The career of a horse without a bridle is ungraceful; the neck extended stiff, and the nose thrust out.*”

King Alfonso, he who first instituted the Order of the Band of Scarf in Spain, amongst other rules of the order, gave them this, that they should never ride mule or mulet, upon penalty of a mark of silver; this I had lately out of Guevara’s Letters. Whoever gave these the title of Golden Epistles had another kind of opinion of them than I have. The Courtier says, that till his time it was a disgrace to a gentleman to ride on one of these creatures: but the Abyssinians, on the contrary, the nearer they are to the person of Prester John, love to be mounted upon large mules, for the greatest dignity and grandeur.

Xenophon tells us, that the Assyrians were fain to keep their horses fettered in the stable, they were so fierce and vicious; and that it required so much time to loose and harness them, that to avoid any disorder this tedious preparation might bring upon them in case of surprise, they never sat down

in their camp till it was first well fortified with ditches and ramparts. His Cyrus, who was so great a master in all manner of horse service, kept his horses to their due work, and never suffered them to have anything to eat till first they had earned it by the sweat of some kind of exercise. The Scythians when in the field and in scarcity of provisions used to let their horses' blood, which they drank, and sustained themselves by that diet:—

"The Scythian comes, who feeds on horseflesh."

Those of Crete, being besieged by Metellus, were in so great necessity for drink that they were fain to quench their thirst with their horses' urine.

To show how much cheaper the Turkish armies support themselves than our European forces, 'tis said that besides the soldiers drink nothing but water and eat nothing but rice and salt flesh pulverized (of which every one may easily carry about with him a month's provision), they know how to feed upon the blood of their horses as well as the Muscovite and Tartar, and salt it for their use.

These new-discovered people of the Indies, when the Spaniards first landed amongst them, had so great an opinion both of the men and horses, that they looked upon the first as gods and the other as animals ennobled above their nature; insomuch that after they were subdued, coming to the men to sue for peace and pardon, and to bring them gold and provisions, they failed not to offer of the same to the horses, with the same kind of harangue to them they had made to the others: interpreting their neighing for a language of truce and friendship.

In the other Indies, to ride upon an elephant was the first and royal place of honor; the second to ride in a coach with four horses; the third to ride upon a camel; and the last and least honor to be carried or drawn by one horse only. Some one of our late writers tells us that he has been in countries in those parts where they ride upon oxen with pads, stirrups, and bridles, and very much at their ease.

Quintus Fabius Maximus Rullianus, in a battle with the Samnites, seeing his horse, after three or four charges, had failed of breaking into the enemy's battalion, took this course, to make them unbridle all their horses and spur their hardest, so that having nothing to check their career, they might through weapons and men open the way to his foot, who by that means gave them a bloody defeat. The same command was given by Quintus Fulvius Flaccus against the Celtiberians:—

"You will do your business with greater advantage of your horses' strength, if you send them unbridled upon the enemy, as it is recorded the Roman horse to their great glory have often done; their bits being taken off, they charged through and again back through the enemy's ranks with great slaughter, breaking down all their spears."

The Duke of Muscovy was anciently obliged to pay this reverence to the Tartars, that when they sent an embassy to him he went out to meet them on foot, and presented them with a goblet of mares' milk (a beverage of greatest esteem amongst them), and if, in drinking, a drop fell by chance upon their horse's mane, he was bound to lick it off with his tongue. The army that Bajazet had sent into Russia was overwhelmed with so dreadful a tempest of snow, that to shelter and preserve themselves from the cold, many killed and embowelled their horses, to creep into their bellies and enjoy the benefit of that vital heat. Bajazet, after that furious battle wherein he was overthrown by Tamerlane, was in a hopeful way of securing his own person by the fleetness of an Arabian mare he had under him, had he not been constrained to let her drink her fill at the ford of a river in his way, which rendered her so heavy and indisposed, that he was afterwards easily overtaken by those that pursued him. They say, indeed, that to let a horse stale takes him off his mettle, but as to drinking, I should rather have thought it would refresh him.

Croesus, marching his army through certain waste lands near Sardis, met with an infinite number of serpents, which the horses devoured with great appetite, and which Herodotus says was a prodigy of ominous portent to his affairs.

We call a horse entire, that has his mane and ears so, and no other will pass muster. The Lacedaemonians, having defeated the Athenians in Sicily, returning triumphant from the victory into the city of Syracuse, amongst other insolences, caused all the horses they had taken to be shorn and led in triumph. Alexander fought with a nation called Dahas, whose discipline it was to march two and two together armed on one horse, to the war; and being in fight, one of them alighted, and so they fought on horseback and on foot, one after another by turns.

I do not think that for graceful riding any nation in the world excels the French. A good horseman, according to our way of speaking, seems rather to have respect to the courage of the man than address in riding. Of all that ever I saw, the most knowing in that art, who had the best seat and the best

method in breaking horses, was Monsieur de Carnavalet, who served our King Henry II.

I have seen a man ride with both his feet upon the saddle, take off his saddle, and at his return take it up again and replace it, riding all the while full speed; having galloped over a cap, make at it very good shots backwards with his bow; take up anything from the ground, setting one foot on the ground and the other in the stirrup: with twenty other ape’s tricks, which he got his living by.

There has been seen in my time at Constantinople two men upon one horse, who, in the height of its speed, would throw themselves off and into the saddle again by turn; and one who bridled and saddled his horse with nothing but his teeth; another who betwixt two horses, one foot upon one saddle and the other upon another, carrying the other man upon his shoulders, would ride full career, the other standing bolt upright upon and making very good shots with his bow; several who would ride full speed with their heels upward, and their heads upon the saddle betwixt several scimitars, with the points upwards, fixed in the harness. When I was a boy, the prince of Sulmona, riding an unbroken horse at Naples, prone to all sorts of actions, held reaux under his knees and toes, as if they had been nailed there, to show the firmness of his seat.

OF ANCIENT CUSTOMS

I SHOULD willingly pardon our people for admitting no other pattern or rule of perfection than their own peculiar manners and customs; for ’tis a common vice, not of the vulgar only, but almost of all men, to walk in the beaten road their ancestors have trod before them. I am content, when they see Fabricius or Laelius, that they look upon their countenance and behavior as barbarous, seeing they are neither clothed nor fashioned according to our mode. But I find fault with their singular indiscretion in suffering themselves to be so blinded and imposed upon by the authority of the present usage as every month to alter their opinion, if custom so require, and that they should so vary their judgment in their own particular concern. When they wore the busk of their doublets up as high as their breasts, they stiffly maintained that they were in their proper place; some years after it was slipped down betwixt their thighs, and then they could laugh at the former fashion as uneasy and intolerable. The fashion now in use makes them absolutely condemn the other two with so great resolution and so universal consent, that a man would think there was a certain kind of madness crept in amongst them, that infatuates their understandings to this strange degree. Now, seeing that our change of fashions is so prompt and sudden, that the inventions of all the tailors in the world cannot furnish out new whim-whams enow to feed our vanity withal, there will often be a necessity that the despised forms must again come in vogue, and these immediately after fall into the same contempt; and that the same judgment must, in the space of fifteen or twenty years, take up half-a-dozen not only divers but contrary opinions, with an incredible lightness and inconstancy; there is not any of us so discreet, who suffers not himself to be gulled with this contradiction, and both in external and internal sight to be insensibly blinded.

I wish to muster up here some old customs that I have in memory, some of them the same with ours, the others different, to the end that, bearing in mind this continual variation of human things, we may have our judgment more clearly and firmly settled.

The thing in use amongst us of fighting with rapier and cloak was in practice amongst the Romans also:—

“They wrapt their cloaks upon the left arm, and drew their swords,”

says Caesar; and he observes a vicious custom of our nation, that continues yet amongst us, which is to stop passengers we meet upon the road, to compel them to give an account who they are, and to take it for an affront and just cause of quarrel if they refuse to do it.

At the Baths, which the ancients made use of every day before they went to dinner, and as frequently as we wash our hands, they at first only bathed their arms and legs; but afterwards, and by a custom that has continued for many ages in most nations of the world, they bathed stark naked in mixed and perfumed water, looking upon it as a great simplicity to bathe in mere water. The most delicate and affected perfumed themselves all over three or four times a day. They often caused their hair to be pinched off, as the women of France have some time since taken up a custom to do their foreheads:—

“You pluck the hairs out of your breast, your arms, and thighs,”

though they had ointments proper for that purpose:—

“She shines with unguents, or with chalk dissolved in vinegar.”

They delighted to lie soft, and alleged it as a great testimony of hardiness to lie upon a mattress. They ate lying upon beds, much after the manner of the Turks in this age:—

“Thus Father Aeneas, from his high bed of state, spoke.”

And ’tis said of the younger Cato, that after the battle of Pharsalia, being entered into a melancholy disposition at the ill posture of the public affairs, he took his repasts always sitting, assuming a strict and austere course of life. It was also their custom to kiss the hands of great persons; the more to honor and caress them. And meeting with friends, they always kissed in salutation, as do the Venetians:—

“And pleased I would with sweetest words give kisses.”

In petitioning or saluting any great man, they used to lay their hands upon his knees. Pasicles the philosopher, brother of Crates, instead of laying his hand upon the knee laid it upon the private parts, and being roughly repulsed by him to whom he made that indecent compliment: “What,” said he, “is not that part your own as well as the other?” They used to eat fruit, as we do, after dinner. They wiped their fundaments (let the ladies, if they please, mince it smaller) with a sponge, which is the reason that spongia is a smutty word in Latin; which sponge was fastened to the end of a stick, as

appears by the story of him who, as he was led along to be thrown to the wild beasts in the sight of the people, asking leave to do his business, and having no other way to despatch himself, forced the sponge and stick down his throat and choked himself. They used to wipe, after coition, with perfumed wool:—

"At tibi nil faciam; sed lota mentula lana."

They had in the streets of Rome vessels and little tubs for passengers to piss in:—

"The little boys in their sleep often think they are near the public urinal, and raise their coats to make use of it."

They had collation betwixt meals, and had in summer cellars of snow to cool their wine; and some there were who made use of snow in winter, not thinking their wine cool enough, even at that cold season of the year. The men of quality had their cupbearers and carvers, and their buffoons to make them sport. They had their meat served up in winter upon chafing dishes, which were set upon the table, and had portable kitchens (of which I myself have seen some) wherein all their service was carried about with them:—

"Do you, if you please, esteem these feasts: we do not like the ambulatory suppers."

In summer they had a contrivance to bring fresh and clear rills through their lower rooms, wherein were great store of living fish, which the guests took out with their own hands to be dressed every man according to his own liking. Fish has ever had this preeminence, and keeps it still, that the grandees, as to them, all pretend to be cooks; and indeed the taste is more delicate than that of flesh, at least to my fancy. But in all sorts of magnificence, debauchery, and voluptuous inventions of effeminacy and expense, we do, in truth, all we can to parallel them; for our wills are as corrupt as theirs: but we want ability to equal them. Our force is no more able to reach them in their vicious, than in their virtuous, qualities, for both the one and the other proceeded from a vigor of soul which was without comparison greater in them than in us; and souls, by how much the weaker they are, by so much have they less power to do either very well or very ill.

The highest place of honor amongst them was the middle. The name going before, or following after, either in writing or speaking, had no signification of grandeur, as is evident by their writings; they will as soon say Oppius and Caesar, as Caesar and Oppius; and me and thee, as thee and

me. This is the reason that made me formerly take notice in the life of Flaminius, in our French Plutarch, of one passage, where it seems as if the author, speaking of the jealousy of honor betwixt the Aetolians and Romans, about the winning of a battle they had with their joined forces obtained, made it of some importance, that in the Greek songs they had put the Aetolians before the Romans: if there be no amphibology in the words of the French translation.

The ladies, in their baths, made no scruple of admitting men amongst them, and moreover made use of their serving-men to rub and anoint them:—

"A slave—his middle girded with a black apron—stands before you, when, naked, you take a hot bath."

They all powdered themselves with a certain powder, to moderate their sweats.

The ancient Gauls, says Sidonius Apollinaris, wore their hair long before and the hinder part of the head shaved, a fashion that begins to revive in this vicious and effeminate age.

The Romans used to pay the watermen their fare at their first stepping into the boat, which we never do till after landing:—

"Whilst the fare's paying, and the mule is being harnessed, a whole hour's time is past."

The women used to lie on the side of the bed next the wall: and for that reason they called Caesar,

"The bed of King Nicomedes."

They took breath in their drinking, and watered their wine:—

"What boy will quickly come and cool the heat of the Falernian wine with clear water?"

And the roguish looks and gestures of our lackeys were also in use amongst them:—

"O Janus, whom no crooked fingers, simulating a stork, peck at behind your back, whom no quick hands deride behind you, by imitating the motion of the white ears of the ass, against whom no mocking tongue is thrust out, as the tongue of the thirsty Apulian dog."

The Argian and Roman ladies mourned in white, as ours did formerly and should do still, were I to govern in this point. But there are whole books on this subject.

OF DEMOCRITUS AND HERACLITUS

THE JUDGMENT is a utensil proper for all subjects, and will have an oar in everything: which is the reason, that in these Essays I take hold of all occasions where, though it happen to be a subject I do not very well understand, I try, however, sounding it at a distance, and finding it too deep for my stature, I keep me on the shore; and this knowledge that a man can proceed no further, is one effect of its virtue, yea, one of those of which it is most proud. One while in an idle and frivolous subject, I try to find out matter whereof to compose a body, and then to prop and support it; another while, I employ it in a noble subject, one that has been tossed and tumbled by a thousand hands, wherein a man can scarce possibly introduce anything of his own, the way being so beaten on every side that he must of necessity walk in the steps of another: in such a case, 'tis the work of the judgment to take the way that seems best, and of a thousand paths, to determine that this or that is the best. I leave the choice of my arguments to fortune, and take that she first presents to me; they are all alike to me, I never design to go through any of them; for I never see all of anything: neither do they who so largely promise to show it others. Of a hundred members and faces that everything has, I take one, onewhile to look it over only, another while to ripple up the skin, and sometimes to pinch it to the bones: I give a stab, not so wide but as deep as I can, and am for the most part tempted to take it in hand by some new light I discover in it. Did I know myself less, I might perhaps venture to handle something or other to the bottom, and to be deceived in my own inability; but sprinkling here one word and there another, patterns cut from several pieces and scattered without design and without engaging myself too far, I am not responsible for them, or obliged to keep close to my subject, without varying at my own liberty and pleasure, and giving up myself to doubt and uncertainty, and to my own governing method, ignorance.

All motion discovers us: the very same soul of Caesar, that made itself so conspicuous in marshalling and commanding the battle of Pharsalia, was also seen as solicitous and busy in the softer affairs of love and leisure. A man makes a judgment of a horse, not only by seeing him when he is showing off his paces, but by his very walk, nay, and by seeing him stand in the stable.

Amongst the functions of the soul, there are some of a lower and meaner form; he who does not see her in those inferior offices as well as in those of nobler note, never fully discovers her; and, peradventure, she is best shown where she moves her simpler pace. The winds of passions take most hold of her in her highest flights; and the rather by reason that she wholly applies herself to, and exercises her whole virtue upon, every particular subject, and never handles more than one thing at a time, and that not according to it, but according to herself. Things in respect to themselves have, peradventure, their weight, measures, and conditions; but when we once take them into us, the soul forms them as she pleases. Death is terrible to Cicero, coveted by Cato, indifferent to Socrates. Health, conscience, authority, knowledge, riches, beauty, and their contraries, all strip themselves at their entering into us, and receive a new robe, and of another fashion, from the soul; and of what color, brown, bright, green, dark, and of what quality, sharp, sweet, deep, or superficial, as best pleases each of them, for they are not agreed upon any common standard of forms, rules, or proceedings; every one is a queen in her own dominions. Let us, therefore, no more excuse ourselves upon the external qualities of things; it belongs to us to give ourselves an account of them. Our good or ill has no other dependence but on ourselves. ’Tis there that our offerings and our vows are due, and not to fortune: she has no power over our manners; on the contrary, they draw and make her follow in their train, and cast her in their own mold. Why should not I judge of Alexander at table, ranting and drinking at the prodigious rate he sometimes used to do? Or, if he played at chess? what string of his soul was not touched by this idle and childish game? I hate and avoid it, because it is not play enough, that it is too grave and serious a diversion, and I am ashamed to lay out as much thought and study upon it as would serve to much better uses. He did not more pump his brains about his glorious expedition into the Indies, nor than another in unravelling a passage upon which depends the safety of mankind. To what a degree does this ridiculous diversion molest the soul, when all her faculties are summoned together upon this trivial account! and how fair an opportunity she herein gives every one to know and to make a right judgment of himself? I do not more thoroughly sift myself in any other posture than this: what passion are we exempted from in it? Anger, spite, malice, impatience, and a vehement desire of getting the better in a concern wherein it were more excusable to be ambitious of being overcome; for to

be eminent, to excel above the common rate in frivolous things, nowise befits a man of honor. What I say in this example may be said in all others. Every particle, every employment of man manifests him equally with any other.

Democritus and Heraclitus were two philosophers, of whom the first, finding human condition ridiculous and vain, never appeared abroad but with a jeering and laughing countenance; whereas Heraclitus commiserating that same condition of ours, appeared always with a sorrowful look, and tears in his eyes:—

> "*The one always, as often as he had stepped one pace from his threshold, laughed, the other always wept.*"

I am clearly for the first humor; not because it is more pleasant to laugh than to weep, but because it expresses more contempt and condemnation than the other, and I think we can never be despised according to our full desert. Compassion and bewailing seem to imply some esteem of and value for the thing bemoaned; whereas the things we laugh at are by that expressed to be of no moment. I do not think that we are so unhappy as we are vain, or have in us so much malice as folly; we are not so full of mischief as inanity; nor so miserable as we are vile and mean. And therefore Diogenes, who passed away his time in rolling himself in his tub, and made nothing of the great Alexander, esteeming us no better than flies or bladders puffed up with wind, was a sharper and more penetrating, and, consequently in my opinion, a juster judge than Timon, surnamed the Manhater; for what a man hates he lays to heart. This last was an enemy to all mankind, who passionately desired our ruin, and avoided our conversation as dangerous, proceeding from wicked and depraved natures: the other valued us so little that we could neither trouble nor infect him by our example; and left us to herd one with another, not out of fear, but from contempt of our society: concluding us as incapable of doing good as evil.

Of the same strain was Statilius' answer, when Brutus courted him into the conspiracy against Caesar; he was satisfied that the enterprise was just, but he did not think mankind worthy of a wise man's concern; according to the doctrine of Hegesias, who said, that a wise man ought to do nothing but for himself, forasmuch as he only was worthy of it: and to the saying of Theodorus, that it was not reasonable a wise man should hazard himself for his country, and endanger wisdom for a company of fools. Our condition is as ridiculous as capable of laughter.

OF THE VANITY OF WORDS

A RHETORICIAN of times past said, that to make little things appear great was his profession. This was a shoemaker, who can make a great shoe for a little foot. They would in Sparta have sent such a fellow to be whipped for making profession of a tricky and deceitful act; and I fancy that Archidamus, who was king of that country, was a little surprised at the answer of Thucydides, when inquiring of him, which was the better wrestler, Pericles, or he, he replied, that it was hard to affirm; for when I have thrown him, said he, he always persuades the spectators that he had no fall and carries away the prize. The women who paint, pounce, and plaster up their ruins, filling up their wrinkles and deformities, are less to blame, because it is no great matter whether we see them in their natural complexions; whereas these make it their business to deceive not our sight only but our judgments, and to adulterate and corrupt the very essence of things. The republics that have maintained themselves in a regular and well-modelled government, such as those of Lacedaemon and Crete, had orators in no very great esteem. Aristo wisely defined rhetoric to be “a science to persuade the people;” Socrates and Plato “an art to flatter and deceive.” And those who deny it in the general description, verify it throughout in their precepts. The Mohammedans will not suffer their children to be instructed in it, as being useless, and the Athenians, perceiving of how pernicious consequence the practice of it was, it being in their city of universal esteem, ordered the principal part, which is to move the affections, with their exordiums and perorations, to be taken away. ’Tis an engine invented to manage and govern a disorderly and tumultuous rabble, and that never is made use of, but like physic to the sick, in a discomposed state. In those where the vulgar or the ignorant, or both together, have been all-powerful and able to give the law, as in those of Athens, Rhodes, and Rome, and where the public affairs have been in a continual tempest of commotion, to such places have the orators always repaired. And in truth, we shall find few persons in those republics who have pushed their fortunes to any great degree of eminence without the assistance of eloquence. Pompey, Caesar, Crassus, Lucullus, Lentulus, Metellus, thence took their chiefest spring, to mount to that degree of authority at which they at last arrived, making it of greater use to them than arms, contrary to the opinion of better times; for, L.

Volumnius speaking publicly in favor of the election of Q. Fabius and Pub. Decius, to the consular dignity: “These are men,” said he, “born for war and great in execution; in the combat of the tongue altogether wanting; spirits truly consular. The subtle, eloquent, and learned are only good for the city, to make praetors of, to administer justice.” Eloquence most flourished at Rome when the public affairs were in the worst condition and most disquieted with intestine commotions; as a free and untilled soil bears the worst weeds. By which it should seem that a monarchical government has less need of it than any other: for the stupidity and facility natural to the common people, and that render them subject to be turned and twined and led by the ears by this charming harmony of words, without weighing or considering the truth and reality of things by the force of reason: this facility, I say, is not easily found in a single person, and it is also more easy by good education and advice to secure him from the impression of this poison. There was never any famous orator known to come out of Persia or Macedon.

I have entered into this discourse upon the occasion of an Italian I lately received into my service, and who was clerk of the kitchen to the late Cardinal Caraffa till his death. I put this fellow upon an account of his office: when he fell to discourse of this palate-science, with such a settled countenance and magisterial gravity, as if he had been handling some profound point of divinity. He made a learned distinction of the several sorts of appetites; of that a man has before he begins to eat, and of those after the second and third service; the means simply to satisfy the first, and then to raise and actuate the other two; the ordering of the sauces, first in general, and then proceeded to the qualities of the ingredients and their effects; the differences of salads according to their seasons, those which ought to be served up hot, and which cold; the manner of their garnishment and decoration to render them acceptable to the eye. After which he entered upon the order of the whole service, full of weighty and important considerations:—

> *“Nor with the least discrimination relates how we should carve hares, and how cut up a hen;”*

and all this set out with lofty and magnificent words, the very same we make use of when we discourse of the government of an empire. Which learned lecture of my man brought this of Terence into my memory:—

"This is salt, that's burnt, that's not washed enough; that's well; remember to do so another time. Thus do I ever advise them to have things done properly, according to my capacity; and lastly, Demea, I command my cooks to look into every dish as if it were a mirror, and tell them what they should do."

And yet even the Greeks themselves very much admired and highly applauded the order and disposition that Paulus Aemilius observed in the feast he gave them at his return from Macedon. But I do not here speak of effects, I speak of words only.

I do not know whether it may have the same operation upon other men that it has upon me, but when I hear our architects thunder out their bombast words of pilasters, architraves, and cornices, of the Corinthian and Doric orders, and such-like jargon, my imagination is presently possessed with the palace of Apollidon; when, after all, I find them but the paltry pieces of my own kitchen door.

To hear men talk of metonomies, metaphors, and allegories, and other grammar words, would not one think they signified some rare and exotic form of speaking? And yet they are phrases that come near to the babble of my chambermaid.

And this other is a gullery of the same stamp, to call the offices of our kingdom by the lofty titles of the Romans, though they have no similitude of function, and still less of authority and power. And this also, which I doubt will one day turn to the reproach of this age of ours, unworthily and indifferently to confer upon any we think fit the most glorious surnames with which antiquity honored but one or two persons in several ages. Plato carried away the surname of Divine, by so universal a consent that never any one repined at it, or attempted to take it from him; and yet the Italians, who pretend, and with good reason, to more sprightly wits and sounder sense than the other nations of their time, have lately bestowed the same title upon Aretin, in whose writings, save tumid phrases set out with smart periods, ingenious indeed but far-fetched and fantastic, and the eloquence, be it what it may, I see nothing in him above the ordinary writers of his time, so far is he from approaching the ancient divinity. And we make nothing of giving the surname of great to princes who have nothing more than ordinary in them.

OF THE PARSIMONY OF THE ANCIENTS

ATTILIUS REGULUS, general of the Roman army in Africa, in the height of all his glory and victories over the Carthaginians, wrote to the Republic to acquaint them that a certain hind he had left in trust with his estate, which was in all but seven acres of land, had run away with all his instruments of husbandry, and entreating therefore, that they would please to call him home that he might take order in his own affairs, lest his wife and children should suffer by this disaster. Whereupon the Senate appointed another to manage his business, caused his losses to be made good, and ordered his family to be maintained at the public expense.

The elder Cato, returning consul from Spain, sold his war-horse to save the money it would have cost in bringing it back by sea into Italy; and being Governor of Sardinia, he made all his visits on foot, without other train than one officer of the Republic who carried his robe and a censer for sacrifices, and for the most part carried his trunk himself. He bragged that he had never worn a gown that cost above ten crowns, nor had ever sent above tenpence to the market for one day’s provision; and that as to his country houses, he had not one that was roughcast on the outside.

Scipio Aemilianus, after two triumphs and two consulships, went an embassy with no more than seven servants in his train. ’Tis said that Homer had never more than one, Plato three, and Zeno, founder of the sect of Stoics, none at all. Tiberius Gracchus was allowed but fivepence halfpenny a day when employed as public minister about the public affairs, and being at that time the greatest man of Rome.

OF A SAYING OF CAESAR.

IF WE would sometimes bestow a little consideration upon ourselves, and employ the time we spend in prying into other men's actions, and discovering things without us, in examining our own abilities we should soon perceive of how infirm and decaying material this fabric of ours is composed. Is it not a singular testimony of imperfection that we cannot establish our satisfaction in any one thing, and that even our own fancy and desire should deprive us of the power to choose what is most proper and useful for us? A very good proof of this is the great dispute that has ever been amongst the philosophers, of finding out man's sovereign good, that continues yet, and will eternally continue, without solution or accord:—

> *"While that which we desire is wanting, it seems to surpass all the rest; then, when we have got it, we want something else; 'tis ever the same thirst."*

Whatever it is that falls into our knowledge and possession, we find that it satisfies not, and we still pant after things to come and unknown, inasmuch as those present do not suffice for us; not that, in my judgment, they have not in them wherewith to do it, but because we seize them with an unruly and immoderate haste:—

> *"For when he saw that almost all things necessarily required for subsistence, and which may render life comfortable, are already prepared to their hand, that men may abundantly attain wealth, honor, praise, may rejoice in the reputation of their children, yet that, notwithstanding, every one has none the less in his heart and home anxieties and a mind enslaved by wearing complaints, he saw that the vessel itself was in fault, and that all good things which were brought into it from without were spoilt by its own imperfections."*

Our appetite is irresolute and fickle; it can neither keep nor enjoy anything with a good grace: and man concluding it to be the fault of the things he is possessed of, fills himself with and feeds upon the idea of things he neither knows nor understands, to which he devotes his hopes and his desires, paying them all reverence and honor, according to the saying of Caesar:—

> *"'Tis the common vice of nature, that we at once repose most confidence, and receive the greatest apprehensions, from things*

unseen, concealed, and unknown.”

OF VAIN SUBTLETIES

THERE ARE a sort of little knacks and frivolous subtleties from which men sometimes expect to derive reputation and applause: as poets, who compose whole poems with every line beginning with the same letter; we see the shapes of eggs, globes, wings, and hatchets cut out by the ancient Greeks by the measure of their verses, making them longer or shorter, to represent such or such a figure. Of this nature was his employment who made it his business to compute into how many several orders the letters of the alphabet might be transposed, and found out that incredible number mentioned in Plutarch. I am mightily pleased with the humor of him, who having a man brought before him that had learned to throw a grain of millet with such dexterity and assurance as never to miss the eye of a needle; and being afterwards entreated to give something for the reward of so rare a performance, he pleasantly, and in my opinion justly, ordered a certain number of bushels of the same grain to be delivered to him, that he might not want wherewith to exercise so famous an art. ’Tis a strong evidence of a weak judgment when men approve of things for their being rare and new, or for their difficulty, where worth and usefulness are not conjoined to recommend them.

I come just now from playing with my own family at who could find out the most things that hold by their two extremities; as Sire, which is a title given to the greatest person in the nation, the king, and also to the vulgar, as merchants, but never to any degree of men between. The women of great quality are called Dames, inferior gentlewomen, Demoiselles, and the meanest sort of women, Dames, at the first. The cloth of state over our tables is not permitted but in the palaces of princes and in taverns. Democritus said, that gods and beasts had sharper sense than men, who are of a middle form. The Romans wore the same habit at funerals and feasts. It is most certain that an extreme fear and an extreme ardor of courage equally trouble and relax the belly. The nickname of Trembling with which they surnamed Sancho XII., king of Navarre, tells us that valor will cause a trembling in the limbs as well as fear. Those who were arming that king, or some other person, who upon the like occasion was wont to be in the same disorder, tried to compose him by representing the danger less he was going to engage himself in: “You understand me ill,” said he, “for could my flesh

know the danger my courage will presently carry it into, it would sink down to the ground." The faintness that surprises us from frigidity or dislike in the exercises of Venus are also occasioned by a too violent desire and an immoderate heat. Extreme coldness and extreme heat boil and roast. Aristotle says, that sows of lead will melt and run with cold and the rigor of winter just as with a vehement heat. Desire and satiety fill all the gradations above and below pleasure with pain. Stupidity and wisdom meet in the same centre of sentiment and resolution, in the suffering of human accidents. The wise control and triumph over ill, the others know it not: these last are, as a man may say, on this side of accidents, the others are beyond them, who after having well weighed and considered their qualities, measured and judged them what they are, by virtue of a vigorous soul leap out of their reach; they disdain and trample them underfoot, having a solid and well-fortified soul, against which the darts of fortune, coming to strike, must of necessity rebound and blunt themselves, meeting with a body upon which they can fix no impression; the ordinary and middle condition of men are lodged betwixt these two extremities, consisting of such as perceive evils, feel them, and are not able to support them. Infancy and decrepitude meet in the imbecility of the brain; avarice and profusion in the same thirst and desire of getting.

A man may say with some color of truth that there is an Abecedarian ignorance that precedes knowledge, and a doctoral ignorance that comes after it: an ignorance that knowledge creates and begets, at the same time that it despatches and destroys the first. Of mean understandings, little inquisitive, and little instructed, are made good Christians, who by reverence and obedience simply believe and are constant in their belief. In the average understandings and the middle sort of capacities, the error of opinion is begotten; they follow the appearance of the first impression, and have some color of reason on their side to impute our walking on in the old beaten path to simplicity and stupidity, meaning us who have not informed ourselves by study. The higher and nobler souls, more solid and clear-sighted, make up another sort of true believers, who by a long and religious investigation of truth, have obtained a clearer and more penetrating light into the Scriptures, and have discovered the mysterious and divine secret of our ecclesiastical polity; and yet we see some, who by the middle step, have arrived at that supreme degree with marvellous fruit and confirmation, as to the utmost limit of Christian intelligence, and enjoy their victory with great

spiritual consolation, humble acknowledgment of the divine favor, reformation of manners, and singular modesty. I do not intend with these to rank those others, who to clear themselves from all suspicion of their former errors and to satisfy us that they are sound and firm, render themselves extremely indiscreet and unjust, in the carrying on our cause, and blemish it with infinite reproaches of violence and oppression. The simple peasants are good people, and so are the philosophers, or whatever the present age calls them, men of strong and clear reason, and whose souls are enriched with an ample instruction of profitable sciences. The mongrels who have disdained the first form of the ignorance of letters, and have not been able to attain to the other (sitting betwixt two stools, as I and a great many more of us do), are dangerous, foolish, and importunate; these are they that trouble the world. And therefore it is that I, for my own part, retreat as much as I can towards the first and natural station, whence I so vainly attempted to advance.

Popular and purely natural poesy has in it certain artless graces, by which she may come into comparison with the greatest beauty of poetry perfected by art: as we see in our Gascon villanels and the songs that are brought us from nations that have no knowledge of any manner of science, nor so much as the use of writing. The middle sort of poesy betwixt these two is despised, of no value, honor, or esteem.

But seeing that the path once laid open to the fancy, I have found, as it commonly falls out, that what we have taken for a difficult exercise and a rare subject, prove to be nothing so, and that after the invention is once warm, it finds out an infinite number of parallel examples. I shall only add this one—that, were these Essays of mine considerable enough to deserve a critical judgment, it might then, I think, fall out that they would not much take with common and vulgar capacities, nor be very acceptable to the singular and excellent sort of men; the first would not understand them enough, and the last too much; and so they may hover in the middle region.

OF PERFUMES

IT HAS been reported of some, as of Alexander the Great, that their sweat exhaled an odoriferous smell, occasioned by some rare and extraordinary constitution, of which Plutarch and others have been inquisitive into the cause. But the ordinary constitution of human bodies is quite otherwise, and their best and chiefest excellency is to be exempt from smell. Nay, the sweetness even of the purest breath has nothing in it of greater perfection than to be without any offensive smell, like those of healthful children, which made Plautus say of a woman:—

"By Castor! the woman smells well, where she smells of nothing."

And such as make use of fine exotic perfumes are with good reason to be suspected of some natural imperfection which they endeavor by these odors to conceal. To smell, though well, is to stink:—

"You laugh at us, Coracinus, because we are not scented; I would, rather than smell well, not smell at all."

And elsewhere:—

"Posthumus, he who ever smells well does not smell well."

I am nevertheless a great lover of good smells, and as much abominate the ill ones, which also I scent at a greater distance, I think, than other men:—

"My nose is quicker to scent a fetid sore or a rank armpit, than a dog to smell out the hidden sow."

Of smells, the simple and natural seem to me the most pleasing. Let the ladies look to that, for 'tis chiefly their concern: amid the most profound barbarism, the Scythian women, after bathing, were wont to powder and crust their faces and all their bodies with a certain odoriferous drug growing in their country, which being cleansed off, when they came to have familiarity with men they were found perfumed and sleek. 'Tis not to be believed how strangely all sorts of odors cleave to me, and how apt my skin is to imbibe them. He that complains of nature that she has not furnished mankind with a vehicle to convey smells to the nose had no reason; for they will do it themselves, especially to me; my very mustachios, which are full, perform that office; for if I stroke them but with my gloves or handkerchief, the smell will not out a whole day; they manifest where I have been, and the

close, luscious, devouring, viscid melting kisses of youthful ardor in my wanton age left a sweetness upon my lips for several hours after. And yet I have ever found myself little subject to epidemic diseases, that are caught, either by conversing with the sick or bred by the contagion of the air, and have escaped from those of my time, of which there have been several sorts in our cities and armies. We read of Socrates, that though he never departed from Athens during the frequent plagues that infested that city, he only was never infected.

Physicians might, I believe, extract greater utility from odors than they do, for I have often observed that they cause an alteration in me and work upon my spirits according to their several virtues; which makes me approve of what is said, that the use of incense and perfumes in churches, so ancient and so universally received in all nations and religions, was intended to cheer us, and to rouse and purify the senses, the better to fit us for contemplation.

I could have been glad, the better to judge of it, to have tasted the culinary art of those cooks who had so rare a way of seasoning exotic odors with the relish of meats; as it was particularly observed in the service of the king of Tunis, who in our days landed at Naples to have an interview with Charles the Emperor. His dishes were larded with odoriferous drugs, to that degree of expense that the cookery of one peacock and two pheasants amounted to a hundred ducats to dress them after their fashion; and when the carver came to cut them up, not only the dining-room, but all the apartments of his palace and the adjoining streets were filled with an aromatic vapor which did not presently vanish.

My chiefest care in choosing my lodgings is always to avoid a thick and stinking air; and those beautiful cities, Venice and Paris, very much lessen the kindness I have for them, the one by the offensive smell of her marshes, and the other of her dirt.

Prayers. From painting by Luis Falero.

OF PRAYERS.

I PROPOSE formless and undetermined fancies, like those who publish doubtful questions, to be after disputed upon in the schools, not to establish truth but to seek it; and I submit them to the judgments of those whose office it is to regulate, not my writings and actions only, but moreover my very thoughts. Let what I here set down meet with correction or applause, it shall be of equal welcome and utility to me, myself beforehand condemning as absurd and impious, if anything shall be found, through ignorance or inadvertency, couched in this rhapsody, contrary to the holy resolutions and prescriptions of the Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church, into which I was born and in which I will die. And yet, always submitting to the authority of their censure, which has an absolute power over me, I thus rashly venture at everything, as in treating upon this present subject.

I know not if or no I am wrong, but since, by a particular favor of the divine bounty, a certain form of prayer has been prescribed and dictated to us, word by word, from the mouth of God Himself, I have ever been of opinion that we ought to have it in more frequent use than we yet have; and if I were worthy to advise, at the sitting down to and rising from our tables, at our rising from and going to bed, and in every particular action wherein prayer is used, I would that Christians always make use of the Lord's Prayer, if not alone, yet at least always. The Church may lengthen and diversify prayers, according to the necessity of our instruction, for I know very well that it is always the same in substance and the same thing: but yet such a privilege ought to be given to that prayer, that the people should have it continually in their mouths; for it is most certain that all necessary petitions are comprehended in it, and that it is infinitely proper for all occasions. 'Tis the only prayer I use in all places and conditions, and which I still repeat instead of changing; whence it also happens that I have no other so entirely by heart as that.

It just now came into my mind, whence it is we should derive that error of having recourse to God in all our designs and enterprises, to call Him to our assistance in all sorts of affairs, and in all places where our weakness stands in need of support, without considering whether the occasion be just or otherwise; and to invoke His name and power, in what

state soever we are, or action we are engaged in, howsoever vicious. He is indeed, our sole and unique protector, and can do all things for us: but though He is pleased to honor us with this sweet paternal alliance, He is, notwithstanding, as just as He is good and mighty; and more often exercises His justice than His power, and favors us according to that, and not according to our petitions.

Plato in his Laws, makes three sorts of belief injurious to the gods; “that there are none; that they concern not themselves about our affairs; that they never refuse anything to our vows, offerings, and sacrifices.” The first of these errors (according to his opinion), never continued rooted in any man from his infancy to his old age; the other two, he confesses, men might be obstinate in.

God’s justice and His power are inseparable; ’tis in vain we invoke His power in an unjust cause. We are to have our souls pure and clean, at that moment at least wherein we pray to Him, and purified from all vicious passions; otherwise we ourselves present Him the rods wherewith to chastise us; instead of repairing anything we have done amiss, we double the wickedness and the offence when we offer to Him, to whom we are to sue for pardon, an affection full of irreverence and hatred. Which makes me not very apt to applaud those whom I observe to be so frequent on their knees, if the actions nearest to the prayer do not give me some evidence of amendment and reformation:—

> *“If a night adulterer, thou coverest thy head with a Santonic cowl.”*

And the practice of a man who mixes devotion with an execrable life seems in some sort more to be condemned than that of a man comformable to his own propension and dissolute throughout; and for that reason it is that our Church denies admittance to and communion with men obstinate and incorrigible in any notorious wickedness. We pray only by custom and for fashion’s sake; or rather, we read or pronounce our prayers aloud, which is no better than an hypocritical show of devotion; and I am scandalized to see a man cross himself thrice at the Benedicite, and as often at Grace (and the more, because it is a sign I have in great veneration and continual use, even when I yawn), and to dedicate all the other hours of the day to acts of malice, avarice and injustice. One hour to God, the rest to the devil, as if by composition and compensation. ’Tis a wonder to see actions so various in themselves succeed one another with such an uniformity of method as not

to interfere nor suffer any alteration, even upon the very confines and passes from the one to the other. What a prodigious conscience must that be that can be at quiet within itself whilst it harbors under the same roof, with so agreeing and so calm a society, both the crime and the judge?

A man whose whole meditation is continually working upon nothing but impurity which he knows to be so odious to Almighty God, what can he say when he comes to speak to Him? He draws back, but immediately falls into a relapse. If the object of divine justice and the presence of his Maker did, as he pretends, strike and chastise his soul, how short soever the repentance might be, the very fear of offending the Infinite Majesty would so often present itself to his imagination that he would soon see himself master of those vices that are most natural and vehement in him. But what shall we say of those who settle their whole course of life upon the profit and emolument of sins, which they know to be mortal? How many trades and vocations have we admitted and countenanced amongst us, whose very essence is vicious? And he that confessing himself to me, voluntarily told me that he had all his life-time professed and practised a religion, in his opinion damnable and contrary to that he had in his heart, only to preserve his credit and the honor of his employments, how could his courage suffer so infamous a confession? What can men say to the divine justice upon this subject? Their repentance consisting in a visible and manifest reparation, they lose the color of alleging it both to God and man. Are they so impudent as to sue for remission without satisfaction and without penitence? I look upon these as in the same condition with the first: but the obstinacy is not there so easy to be overcome. This contrariety and volubility of opinion so sudden, so violent, that they feign, are a kind of miracle to me: they present us with the state of an indigestible agony of mind.

It seemed to me a fantastic imagination in those who, these late years past, were wont to reproach every man they knew to be of any extraordinary parts, and made profession of the Catholic religion, that it was but outwardly; maintaining, moreover, to do him honor forsooth, that whatever he might pretend to the contrary he could not but in his heart be of their reformed opinion. An untoward disease, that a man should be so riveted to his own belief as to fancy that others cannot believe otherwise than as he does: and yet worse, that they should entertain so vicious an opinion of such great parts as to think any man so qualified, should prefer any present advantage of fortune to the promises of eternal life and the

menaces of eternal damnation. They may believe me: could anything have tempted my youth, the ambition of the danger and difficulties in the late commotions had not been the least motives.

It is not without very good reason, in my opinion, that the Church interdicts the promiscuous, indiscreet, and irreverent use of the holy and divine Psalms, with which the Holy Ghost inspired King David. We ought not to mix God in our actions, but with the highest reverence and caution; that poesy is too holy to be put to no other use than to exercise the lungs and to delight our ears; it ought to come from the conscience, and not from the tongue. It is not fit that a prentice in his shop, amongst his vain and frivolous thoughts, should be permitted to pass away his time and divert himself with such sacred things. Neither is it decent to see the Holy Book of the holy mysteries of our belief tumbled up and down a hall or a kitchen: they were formerly mysteries, but are now become sports and recreations. ’Tis a book too serious and too venerable to be cursorily or slightly turned over: the reading of the scripture ought to be a temperate and premeditated act, and to which men should always add this devout preface, sursum corda, preparing even the body to so humble and composed a gesture and countenance as shall evidence a particular veneration and attention. Neither is it a book for every one to fist, but the study of select men set apart for that purpose, and whom Almighty God has been pleased to call to that office and sacred function: the wicked and ignorant grow worse by it. ’Tis not a story to tell, but a history to revere, fear, and adore. Are not they then pleasant men who think they have rendered this fit for the people’s handling by translating it into the vulgar tongue? Does the understanding of all therein contained only stick at words? Shall I venture to say further, that by coming so near to understand a little, they are much wider of the whole scope than before. A pure and simple ignorance and wholly depending upon the exposition of qualified persons, was far more learned and salutary than this vain and verbal knowledge, which has only proved the nurse of temerity and presumption.

And I do further believe that the liberty every one has taken to disperse the sacred writ into so many idioms carries with it a great deal more of danger than utility. The Jews, Mohammedans, and almost all other peoples, have reverentially espoused the language wherein their mysteries were first conceived, and have expressly, and not without color of reason, forbidden the alteration of them into any other. Are we assured that in Biscay and in

Brittany there are enough competent judges of this affair to establish this translation into their own language? The universal Church has not a more difficult and solemn judgment to make. In preaching and speaking the interpretation is vague, free, mutable, and of a piece by itself; so ’tis not the same thing.

One of our Greek historians justly censures the age he lived in, because the secrets of the Christian religion were dispersed into the hands of every mechanic, to expound and argue upon, according to his own fancy, and that we ought to be much ashamed, we who by God’s especial favor enjoy the pure mysteries of piety, to suffer them to be profaned by the ignorant rabble; considering that the Gentiles expressly forbade Socrates, Plato, and the other sages to inquire into or so much as to mention the things committed to the priests of Delphi; and he says, moreover, that the factions of princes upon theological subjects are armed not with zeal but fury; that zeal springs from the divine wisdom and justice, and governs itself with prudence and moderation, but degenerates into hatred and envy, producing tares and nettles instead of corn and wine when conducted by human passions. And it was truly said by another, who, advising the Emperor Theodosius, told him that disputes did not so much rock the schisms of the Church asleep, as it roused and animated heresies; that, therefore, all contentions and dialectic disputations were to be avoided, and men absolutely to acquiesce in the prescriptions and formulas of faith established by the ancients. And the Emperor Andronicus having overheard some great men at high words in his palace with Lapodius about a point of ours of great importance, gave them so severe a check as to threaten to cause them to be thrown into the river if they did not desist. The very women and children nowadays take upon them to lecture the oldest and most experienced men about the ecclesiastical laws; whereas the first of those of Plato forbids them to inquire so much as into the civil laws, which were to stand instead of divine ordinances; and, allowing the old men to confer amongst themselves or with the magistrate about those things, he adds, provided it be not in the presence of young or profane persons.

A bishop has left in writing that at the other end of the world there is an isle, by the ancients called Dioscorides, abundantly fertile in all sorts of trees and fruits, and of an exceedingly healthful air; the inhabitants of which are Christians, having churches and altars, only adorned with crosses without any other images, great observers of fasts and feasts, exact payers

of their tithes to the priests, and so chaste, that none of them is permitted to have to do with more than one woman in his life; as to the rest, so content with their condition, that environed with the sea they know nothing of navigation, and so simple that they understand not one syllable of the religion they profess and wherein they are so devout: a thing incredible to such as do not know that the Pagans, who are so zealous idolaters, know nothing more of their gods than their bare names and their statues. The ancient beginning of Menalippus, a tragedy of Euripides, ran thus:

- “O Jupiter! for that name alone
- Of what thou art to me is known.”

I have also known in my time some men’s writings found fault with for being purely human and philosophical, without any mixture of theology; and yet, with some show of reason, it might, on the contrary, be said that the divine doctrine, as queen and regent of the rest, better keeps her state apart, that she ought to be sovereign throughout, not subsidiary and suffragan, and that, peradventure, grammatical, rhetorical, logical examples may elsewhere be more suitably chosen, as also the material for the stage, games, and public entertainments, than from so sacred a matter; that divine reasons are considered with greater veneration and attention by themselves, and in their own proper style, than when mixed with and adapted to human discourse; that it is a fault much more often observed that the divines write too humanly, than that the humanists write not theologically enough. Philosophy, says St. Chrysostom, has long been banished the holy schools, as an handmaid altogether useless and thought unworthy to look, so much as in passing by the door, into the sanctuary of the holy treasures of the celestial doctrine; that the human way of speaking is of a much lower form and ought not to adopt for herself the dignity and majesty of divine eloquence. Let who will verbis indisciplinatis talk of fortune, destiny, accident, good and evil hap, and other such-like phrases, according to his own humor; I for my part propose fancies merely human and merely my own, and that simply as human fancies, and separately considered, not as determined by any decree from heaven, incapable of doubt or dispute; matter of opinion, not matter of faith; things which I discourse of according to my own notions, not as I believe, according to God; after a laical, not

clerical, and yet always after a very religious manner, as children prepare their exercises, not to instruct but to be instructed.

And might it not be said, that an edict enjoining all people but such as are public professors of divinity, to be very reserved in writing of religion, would carry with it a very good color of utility and justice— and to me, amongst the rest peradventure, to hold my prating? I have been told that even those who are not of our Church nevertheless amongst themselves expressly forbid the name of God to be used in common discourse, not so much even by way of interjection, exclamation, assertion of a truth, or comparison; and I think them in the right: upon what occasion soever we call upon God to accompany and assist us, it ought always to be done with the greatest reverence and devotion.

There is, as I remember, a passage in Xenophon where he tells us that we ought so much the more seldom to call upon God, by how much it is hard to compose our soul to such a degree of calmness, patience, and devotion as it ought to be in at such a time; otherwise our prayers are not only vain and fruitless, but vicious: “forgive us,” we say, “our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us;” what do we mean by this petition but that we present to God a soul free from all rancor and revenge? And yet we make nothing of invoking God’s assistance in our vices, and inviting Him into our unjust designs:

> *“Which you can only impart to the gods, when you have gained them over;”*

the covetous man prays for the conservation of his vain and superfluous riches; the ambitious for victory and the good conduct of his fortune; the thief calls Him to his assistance, to deliver him from the dangers and difficulties that obstruct his wicked designs, or returns Him thanks for the facility he has met with in cutting a man’s throat; at the door of the house men are going to storm or break into by force of a petard, they fall to prayers for success, their intentions and hopes of cruelty, avarice, and lust:—

> *“This therefore, with which you seek to draw the ear of Jupiter, say to Staius. ‘O Jupiter! O good Jupiter!’ let him cry. Think you Jupiter himself would not cry out upon it?”*

Marguerite, Queen of Navarre, tells of a young prince, who, though she does not name him, is easily enough by his great qualities to be known, who going upon an amorous assignation to lie with an advocate’s wife of

Paris, his way thither being through a church, he never passed that holy place going to or returning from his pious exercise, but he always kneeled down to pray. Wherein he would employ the divine favor, his soul being full of such virtuous meditations, I leave others to judge, which, nevertheless, she instances for a testimony of singular devotion. But this is not the only proof we have that women are not very fit to treat of theological affairs.

A true prayer and religious reconciling of ourselves to Almighty God cannot enter into an impure soul, subject at the very time to the dominion of Satan. He who calls God to his assistance whilst in a course of vice, does as if a cut-purse should call a magistrate to help him, or like those who introduce the name of God to the attestation of a lie:—

"We whisper our bad wishes."

There are few men who durst publish to the world the prayers they make to Almighty God:—

"'Tis not convenient for every one to bring the prayers he mutters out of the temple, and to give his wishes to the public ear;"

and this is the reason why the Pythagoreans would have them always public and heard by every one, to the end they might not prefer indecent or unjust petitions as this man:—

"When he has clearly said Apollo! he moves his lips, fearful to be heard; he murmurs: O fair Laverna, grant me the talent to deceive; grant me to appear holy and just; shroud my sins with night, and cast a cloud over my frauds."

The gods severely punished the wicked prayers of Oedipus in granting them: he had prayed that his children might amongst themselves determine the succession to his throne by arms, and was so miserable as to see himself taken at his word. We are not to pray that all things may go as we would have them, but as most concurrent with prudence.

We seem, in truth, to make use of our prayers as of a kind of jargon, and as those do who employ holy words about sorceries and magical operations; and as if we reckoned the benfit we are to reap from them as depending upon the contexture, sound, and jingle of words, or upon the grave composing of the countenance. For having the soul contaminated with concupiscence, not touched with repentance, or comforted by any late reconciliation with God, we go to present Him such words as the memory suggests to the tongue, and hope from thence to obtain the remission of our

sins. There is nothing so easy, so sweet, and so favorable, as the divine law: it calls and invites us to her, guilty and abominable as we are; extends her arms and receives us into her bosom, foul and polluted as we at present are, and are for the future to be. But then, in return, we are to look upon her with a respectful eye; we are to receive this pardon with all gratitude and submission, and for that instant at least, wherein we address ourselves to her, to have the soul sensible of the ills we have committed, and at enmity with those passions that seduced us to offend her; neither the gods nor good men (says Plato) will accept the present of a wicked man:—

> "*If a pure hand has touched the altar, the pious offering of a small cake and a few grains of salt will appease the offended gods more effectually than costly sacrifices.*"

OF AGE

I CANNOT allow of the way in which we settle for ourselves the duration of our life. I see that the sages contract it very much in comparison of the common opinion: “what,” said the younger Cato to those who would stay his hand from killing himself, “am I now of an age to be reproached that I go out of the world too soon?” And yet he was but eight-and-forty years old. He thought that to be a mature and advanced age, considering how few arrive unto it. And such as, soothing their thoughts with I know not what course of nature, promise to themselves some years beyond it, could they be privileged from the infinite number of accidents to which we are by a natural subjection exposed, they might have some reason so to do. What an idle conceit is it to expect to die of a decay of strength, which is the effect of extremest age, and to propose to ourselves no shorter lease of life than that, considering it is a kind of death of all others the most rare and very seldom seen? We call that only a natural death; as if it were contrary to nature to see a man break his neck with a fall, be drowned in shipwreck, be snatched away with a pleurisy or the plague, and as if our ordinary condition did not expose us to these inconveniences. Let us no longer flatter ourselves with these fine words; we ought rather, peradventure, to call that natural which is general, common, and universal.

To die of old age is a death rare, extraordinary, and singular, and, therefore, so much less natural than the others; ’tis the last and extremest sort of dying: and the more remote, the less to be hoped for. It is, indeed, the bourn beyond which we are not to pass, and which the law of nature has set as a limit, not to be exceeded; but it is, withal, a privilege she is rarely seen to give us to last till then. ’Tis a lease she only signs by particular favor, and it may be to one only in the space of two or three ages, and then with a pass to boot, to carry him through all the traverses and difficulties she has strewed in the way of this long career. And therefore my opinion is, that when once forty years we should consider it as an age to which very few arrive. For seeing that men do not usually proceed so far, it is a sign that we are pretty well advanced; and since we have exceeded the ordinary bounds, which is the just measure of life, we ought not to expect to go much further; having escaped so many precipices of death, whereinto we have seen so many other men fall, we should acknowledge that so extraordinary

a fortune as that which has hitherto rescued us from those eminent perils, and kept us alive beyond the ordinary term of living, is not like to continue long.

’Tis a fault in our very laws to maintain this error: these say that a man is not capable of managing his own estate till he be five-and-twenty years old, whereas he will have much ado to manage his life so long. Augustus cut off five years from the ancient Roman standard, and declared that thirty years old was sufficient for a judge. Servius Tullius superseded the knights of above seven-and-forty years of age from the fatigues of war; Augustus dismissed them at forty-five; though methinks it seems a little unreasonable that men should be sent to the fireside till five-and-fifty or sixty years of age. I should be of opinion that our vocation and employment should be as far as possible extended for the public good: I find the fault on the other side, that they do not employ us early enough. This emperor was arbiter of the whole world at nineteen, and yet would have a man to be thirty before he could be fit to determine a dispute about a gutter.

For my part, I believe our souls are adult at twenty as much as they are ever like to be, and as capable then as ever. A soul that has not by that time given evident earnest of its force and virtue will never after come to proof. The natural qualities and virtues produce what they have of vigorous and fine, within that term or never:—

> *“If the thorn does not prick at its birth, ’twill hardly ever prick at all,”*
>
> as they say in Dauphine.

Of all the great human actions I ever heard or read of, of what sort soever, I have observed, both in former ages and our own, more were performed before the age of thirty than after; and this ofttimes in the very lives of the same men. May I not confidently instance in those of Hannibal and his great rival Scipio? The better half of their lives they lived upon the glory they had acquired in their youth; great men after, ’tis true, in comparison of others; but by no means in comparison of themselves. As to my own particular, I do certainly believe that since that age, both my understanding and my constitution have rather decayed than improved, and retired rather than advanced. ’Tis possible, that with those who make the best use of their time, knowledge and experience may increase with their years; but vivacity, promptitude, steadiness, and other pieces of us, of much

greater importance, and much more essentially our own, languish and decay:—

> *"When once the body is shaken by the violence of time, blood and vigor ebbing away, the judgment halts, the tongue and the mind dote."*

Sometimes the body first submits to age, sometimes the mind; and I have seen enough who have got a weakness in their brains before either in their legs or stomach; and by how much the more it is a disease of no great pain to the sufferer, and of obscure symptoms, so much greater is the danger. For this reason it is that I complain of our laws, not that they keep us too long to our work, but that they set us to work too late. For the frailty of life considered, and to how many ordinary and natural rocks it is exposed, one ought not to give up so large a portion of it to childhood, idleness, and apprenticeship.

OF THE INCONSISTENCY OF OUR ACTIONS

SUCH AS make it their business to oversee human actions, do not find themselves in anything so much perplexed as to reconcile them and bring them into the world's eye with the same lustre and reputation; for they commonly so strangely contradict one another that it seems impossible they should proceed from one and the same person. We find the younger Marius one while a son of Mars and another a son of Venus. Pope Boniface VIII. entered, it is said, into his Papacy like a fox, behaved himself in it like a lion, and died like a dog; and who could believe it to be the same Nero, the perfect image of all cruelty, who, having the sentence of a condemned man brought to him to sign, as was the custom, cried out, "O that I had never been taught to write!" so much it went to his heart to condemn a man to death. All story is full of such examples, and every man is able to produce so many to himself, or out of his own practice or observation, that I sometimes wonder to see men of understanding give themselves the trouble of sorting these pieces, considering that irresolution appears to me to be the most common and manifest vice of our nature: witness the famous verse of the player Publius:—

"'Tis evil counsel that will admit no change."

There seems some reason in forming a judgment of a man from the most usual methods of his life; but, considering the natural instability of our manners and opinions, I have often thought even the best authors a little out in so obstinately endeavoring to make of us any constant and solid contexture; they choose a general air of a man, and according to that interpret all his actions, of which, if they cannot bend some to a uniformity with the rest, they are presently imputed to dissimulation. Augustus has escaped them, for there was in him so apparent, sudden, and continual variety of actions all the whole course of his life, that he has slipped away clear and undecided from the most daring critics. I can more hardly believe a man's constancy than any other virtue, and believe nothing sooner than the contrary. He that would judge of a man in detail and distinctly, bit by bit, would oftener be able to speak the truth. It is a hard matter, from all antiquity, to pick out a dozen men who have formed their lives to one certain and constant course, which is the principal design of wisdom; for to comprise it all in one word, says one of the ancients, and to contract all the

rules of human life into one, “it is to will, and not to will, always one and the same thing: I will not vouchsafe,” says he, “to add, provided the will be just, for if it be not just, it is impossible it should be always one.” I have indeed formerly learned that vice is nothing but irregularity and want of measure, and therefore ’tis impossible to fix constancy to it. ’Tis a saying of Demosthenes, “that the beginning of all virtue is consultation and deliberation; the end and perfection, constancy.” If we would resolve on any certain course by reason, we should pitch upon the best, but nobody has thought on’t:—

> *“That which he sought he despises; what he lately lost, he seeks again. He fluctuates, and is inconsistent in the whole order of life.”*

Our ordinary practice is to follow the inclinations of our appetite, be it to the left or right, upwards or downwards, according as we are wafted by the breath of occasion. We never meditate what we would have till the instant we have a mind to have it; and change like that little creature which receives its color from what it is laid upon. What we but just now proposed to ourselves we immediately alter, and presently return again to it; ’tis nothing but shifting and inconsistency:—

> *“We are turned about like the top with the thong of others.”*

We do not go, we are driven; like things that float, now leisurely, then with violence, according to the gentleness or rapidity of the current:—

> *“Do we not see them, uncertain what they want, and always asking for something new, as if they could get rid of the burthen?”*

Every day a new whimsy, and our humors keep motion with the time.

> *“Such are the minds of men, that they change as the light with which father Jupiter himself has illumined the increasing earth.”*

We fluctuate betwixt various inclinations; we will nothing freely, nothing absolutely, nothing constantly. In any one who had prescribed and established determinate laws and rules in his head for his own conduct, we should perceive an equality of manners, an order and an infallible relation of one thing or action to another, shine through his whole life; Empedocles observed this discrepancy in the Agrigentines, that they gave themselves up to delights, as if every day was their last, and built as if they had been to live for ever. The judgment would not be hard to make, as is very evident in the younger Cato; he who therein has found one step, it will lead him to all the rest; ’tis a harmony of very according sounds, that cannot jar. But with us ’tis quite contrary; every particular action requires a particular judgment.

The surest way to steer, in my opinion, would be to take our measures from the nearest allied circumstances, without engaging in a longer inquisition, or without concluding any other consequence. I was told, during the civil disorders of our poor kingdom, that a maid, hard by the place where I then was, had thrown herself out of a window to avoid being forced by a common soldier who was quartered in the house; she was not killed by the fall, and therefore, repeating her attempt would have cut her own throat, had she not been prevented; but having, nevertheless, wounded herself to some show of danger, she voluntarily confessed that the soldier had not as yet importuned her otherwise than by courtship, earnest solicitation, and presents; but that she was afraid that in the end he would have proceeded to violence, all which she delivered with such a countenance and accent, and withal embrued in her own blood, the highest testimony of her virtue, that she appeared another Lucretia; and yet I have since been very well assured that both before and after she was not so difficult a piece. And, according to my host's tale in Ariosto, be as handsome a man and as worthy a gentleman as you will, do not conclude too much upon your mistress's inviolable chastity for having been repulsed; you do not know but she may have a better stomach to your muleteer.

Antigonus, having taken one of his soldiers into a great degree of favor and esteem for his valor, gave his physicians strict charge to cure him of a long and inward disease under which he had a great while languished, and observing that, after his cure, he went much more coldly to work than before, he asked him what had so altered and cowed him: "Yourself, sir," replied the other, "by having eased me of the pains that made me weary of my life." Lucullus's soldier having been rifled by the enemy, performed upon them in revenge a brave exploit, by which having made himself a gainer, Lucullus, who had conceived a good opinion of him from that action, went about to engage him in some enterprise of very great danger, with all the plausible persuasions and promises he could think of;

"Words which might add courage to any timid man;"

"Pray employ," answered he, "some miserable plundered soldier in that affair":—

"Some poor fellow, who has lost his purse, will go whither you wish, said he,"

and flatly refused to go. When we read that Mahomet having furiously rated Chasan, Bassa of the Janissaries, because he had seen the Hungarians

break into his squadrons, and himself behave very ill in the business, and that Chasan, instead of any other answer, rushed furiously alone, scimitar in hand, into the first body of the enemy, where he was presently cut to pieces, we are not to look upon that action, peradventure, so much as vindication as a turn of mind, not so much natural valor as a sudden despite. The man you saw yesterday so adventurous and brave, you must not think it strange to see him as great a poltroon the next: anger, necessity, company, wine, or the sound of the trumpet had roused his spirits; this is no valor formed and established by reason, but accidentally created by such circumstances, and therefore it is no wonder if by contrary circumstances it appear quite another thing.

These supple variations and contradictions so manifest in us, have given occasion to some to believe that man has two souls; other two distinct powers that always accompany and incline us, the one towards good and the other towards ill, according to their own nature and propension; so abrupt a variety not being imaginable to flow from one and the same source.

For my part, the puff of every accident not only carries me along with it according to its own proclivity, but moreover I discompose and trouble myself by the instability of my own posture; and whoever will look narrowly into his own bosom, will hardly find himself twice in the same condition. I give to my soul sometimes one face and sometimes another, according to the sides I turn her to. If I speak variously of myself, it is because I consider myself variously; all the contrarieties are there to be found in one corner or another; after one fashion or another: bashful, insolent; chaste, lustful; prating, silent; laborious, delicate; ingenious, heavy; melancholic, pleasant; lying, true; knowing, ignorant; liberal, covetous, and prodigal: I find all this in myself, more or less, according as I turn myself about; and whoever will sift himself to the bottom, will find in himself, and even in his own judgment, this volubility and discordance. I have nothing to say of myself entirely, simply, and solidly without mixture and confusion. Distinguo is the most universal member of my logic. Though I always intend to speak well of good things, and rather to interpret such things as fall out in the best sense than otherwise, yet such is the strangeness of our condition, that we are often pushed on to do well even by vice itself, if well-doing were not judged by the intention only. One gallant action, therefore, ought not to conclude a man valiant; if a man were brave indeed, he would be always so, and upon all occasions. If it were a habit of

valor and not a sally, it would render a man equally resolute in all accidents; the same alone as in company; the same in lists as in a battle: for, let them say what they will, there is not one valor for the pavement and another for the field; he would bear a sickness in his bed as bravely as a wound in the field, and no more fear death in his own house than at an assault. We should not then see the same man charge into a breach with a brave assurance, and afterwards torment himself like a woman for the loss of a trial at law or the death of a child; when, being an infamous coward, he is firm in the necessities of poverty; when he shrinks at the sight of a barber's razor, and rushes fearless upon the swords of the enemy, the action is commendable, not the man.

Many of the Greeks, says Cicero, cannot endure the sight of an enemy, and yet are courageous in sickness; the Cimbrians and Celtiberians quite contrary—

> *"Nothing can be regular that does not proceed from a fixed ground of reason."*

No valor can be more extreme in its kind than that of Alexander: but it is of but one kind, nor full enough throughout, nor universal. Incomparable as it is, it has yet some blemishes; of which his being so often at his wits' end upon every light suspicion of his captains conspiring against his life, and the carrying himself in that inquisition with so much vehemence and indiscreet injustice, and with a fear that subverted his natural reason, is one pregnant instance. The superstition, also, with which he was so much tainted, carries along with it some image of pusillanimity; and the excess of his penitence for the murder of Clytus is also a testimony of the unevenness of his courage. All we perform is no other than a cento, as a man may say, of several pieces, and we would acquire honor by a false title. Virtue cannot be followed but for herself, and if one sometimes borrows her mask to some other purpose, she presently pulls it away again. 'Tis a vivid and strong tincture which, when the soul has once thoroughly imbibed it, will not out but with the piece. And, therefore, to make a right judgment of a man, we are long and very observingly to follow his trace: if constancy does not there stand firm upon her own proper base—

> *"If the way of his life is thoroughly considered and traced out,"*

if the variety of occurrences makes him alter his pace (his path, I mean, for the pace may be faster or slower) let him go; such a one runs before the wind, "Avau le vent," as the motto of our Talbot has it.

’Tis no wonder, says one of the ancients, that chance has so great a dominion over us, since it is by chance we live. It is not possible for any one who has not designed his life for some certain end, to dispose his particular actions; it is impossible for any one to arrange the pieces, who has not the whole form already contrived in his imagination. Of what use are colors to him that knows not what he is to paint? No one lays down a certain design for his life, and we only deliberate thereof by pieces. The archer ought first to know at what he is to aim, and then accommodate his arm, bow, string, shaft, and motion to it; our counsels deviate and wander, because not levelled to any determinate end. No wind serves him who addresses his voyage to no certain port. I cannot acquiesce in the judgment given by one in the behalf of Sophocles, who concluded him capable of the management of domestic affairs, against the accusation of his son, from having read one of his tragedies.

Neither do I allow of the conjecture of the Parians, sent to regulate the Milesians, sufficient for such a consequence, as they from thence derived: coming to visit the island, they took notice of such grounds as were best husbanded, and such country-houses as were best governed; and having taken the names of the owners, when they had assembled the citizens, they appointed these farmers for new governors and magistrates; concluding that they, who had been so provident in their own private concerns, would be so of the public too. We are all lumps, and of so various and inform a contexture, that every piece plays, every moment, its own game, and there is as much difference betwixt us and ourselves as betwixt us and others:—

“Esteem it a great thing always to act as one and the same man.”

Since ambition can teach man valor, temperance, and liberality, and even justice too; seeing that avarice can inspire the courage of a shop-boy, bred and nursed up in obscurity and ease, with the assurance to expose himself so far from the fireside to the mercy of the waves and angry Neptune in a frail boat; that she further teaches discretion and prudence; and that even Venus can inflate boys under the discipline of the rod with boldness and resolution, and infuse masculine courage into the heart of tender virgins in their mothers’ arms:—

“She leading, the maiden, furtively passing by the recumbent guards, goes alone in the darkness to the youth:”

’tis not all the understanding has to do, simply to judge us by our outward actions; it must penetrate the very soul, and there discover by what

springs the motion is guided. But that being a high and hazardous undertaking, I could wish that fewer would attempt it.

OF DRUNKENNESS

THE WORLD is nothing but variety and difference: vices are all alike, as they are vices, and peradventure the Stoic understand them so; but although they are equally vices, yet they are not all equal vices; and he who has transgressed the ordinary bounds a hundred paces:

Drunkenness. From painting by Luigi Mussini.

“Beyond or within which the right cannot exist,”

should not be in a worse condition than he that has advanced but ten, is not to be believed; or that sacrilege is not worse than stealing a cabbage:—

“Nec vincet ratio hoc, tantumdem ut peccet, idemque,
Qui teneros caules alieni fregerit horti,
Et qui nocturnus divum sacra legerit.”

There is in this as great diversity as in anything whatever. The confounding of the order and measure of sins is dangerous: murderers, traitors, and tyrants get too much by it, and it is not reasonable they should flatter their consciences, because another man is idle, lascivious, or not assiduous at his devotion. Every one overrates the offence of his companions, but extenuates his own. Our very instructors themselves rank them sometimes, in my opinion, very ill. As Socrates said that the principal office of wisdom was to distinguish good from evil, we, the best of whom are vicious, ought also to say the same of the science of distinguishing

betwixt vice and vice, without which, and that very exactly performed, the virtuous and the wicked will remain confounded and unrecognized.

Now, amongst the rest, drunkenness seems to me to be a gross and brutish vice. The soul has greater part in the rest, and there are some vices that have something, if a man may so say, of generous in them; there are vices wherein there is a mixture of knowledge, diligence, valor, prudence, dexterity, and address; this one is totally corporeal and earthly. And the rudest nation this day in Europe is that alone where it is in fashion. Other vices discompose the understanding: this totally overthrows it and renders the body stupid:—

> *"When the power of wine has penetrated us, a heaviness of the limbs follows, the legs of the tottering person are impeded; the tongue grows torpid, the mind is dimmed, the eyes swim; noise, hiccup, and quarrels arise."*

The worst state of man is that wherein he loses the knowledge and government of himself. And 'tis said, amongst other things upon this subject, that, as the must fermenting in a vessel, works up to the top whatever it has in the bottom, so wine, in those who have drunk beyond measure, vents the most inward secrets:—

> *"Thou disclosest to the merry Lyaeus the cares and secret counsel of the wise."*

Josephus tells us that by giving an ambassador the enemy had sent to him his full dose of liquor, he wormed out his secrets. And yet, Augustus, committing the most inward secrets of his affairs to Lucius Piso, who conquered Thrace, never found him faulty in the least, no more than Tiberius did Cossus, with whom he intrusted his whole counsels, though we know they were both so given to drink that they have often been fain to carry both the one and the other drunk out of the Senate:—

> *"Their veins full, as usual, of yesterday's Bacchus."*

And the design of killing Caesar was as safely communicated to Cimber, though he would often be drunk, as to Cassius, who drank nothing but water. We see our Germans, when drunk as the devil, know their post, remember the word, and keep to their ranks:—

> "*Nor is a victory easily obtained over men so drunk, they can scarce speak or stand."*

I could not have believed there had been so profound, senseless, and dead a degree of drunkenness had I not read in history that Attalus, having,

to put a notable affront upon him, invited to supper the same Pausanias, who upon the very same occasion afterwards killed Philip of Macedon, a king who by his excellent qualities gave sufficient testimony of his education in the house and company of Epaminondas, made him drink to such a pitch that he could after abandon his beauty, as of a hedge strumpet, to the muleteers and servants of the basest office in the house. And I have been further told by a lady whom I highly honor and esteem, that near Bordeaux and about Castres where she lives, a country woman, a widow of chaste repute, perceiving in herself the first symptoms of breeding, innocently told her neighbors that if she had a husband she should think herself with child; but the causes of suspicion every day more and more increasing, and at last growing up to a manifest proof, the poor woman was reduced to the necessity of causing it to be proclaimed in her parish church, that whoever had done that deed and would frankly confess it, she did not only promise to forgive, but moreover to marry him, if he liked the motion; whereupon a young fellow that served her in the quality of a laborer, encouraged by this proclamation, declared that he had one holiday found her, having taken too much of the bottle, so fast asleep by the chimney and in so indecent a posture, that he could conveniently do his business without waking her; and they yet live together man and wife.

It is true that antiquity has not much decried this vice; the writings even of several philosophers speak very tenderly of it, and even amongst the Stoics there are some who advise folks to give themselves sometimes the liberty to drink, nay, to drunkenness, to refresh the soul:—

> *"In this trial of power formerly they relate that the great Socrates deserved the palm."*

That censor and reprover of others, Cato, was reproached that he was a hard drinker:—

> *"And of old Cato it is said, that his courage was often warmed with wine."*

Cyrus, that so renowned king, amongst the other qualities by which he claimed to be preferred before his brother Artaxerxes, urged this excellence, that he could drink a great deal more than he. And in the best governed nations this trial of skill in drinking is very much in use. I have heard Silvius, an excellent physician of Paris, say that lest the digestive faculties of the stomach should grow idle, it were not amiss once a month to rouse them by this excess, and to spur them lest they should grow dull and rusty;

and one author tells us that the Persians used to consult about their most important affairs after being well warmed with wine.

My taste and constitution are greater enemies to this vice than my discourse; for besides that I easily submit my belief to the authority of ancient opinions, I look upon it indeed as an unmanly and stupid vice, but less malicious and hurtful than the others, which, almost all, more directly jostle public society. And if we cannot please ourselves but it must cost us something, as they hold, I find this vice costs a man's conscience less than the others, besides that it is of no difficult preparation, nor hard to be found, a consideration not altogether to be despised. A man well advanced both in dignity and age, amongst three principal commodities that he said remained to him of life, reckoned to me this for one, and where would a man more justly find it than amongst the natural conveniences? But he did not take it right, for delicacy and the curious choice of wines is therein to be avoided. If you found your pleasure upon drinking of the best, you condemn yourself to the penance of drinking of the worst. Your taste must be more indifferent and free; so delicate a palate is not required to make a good toper. The Germans drink almost indifferently of all wines with delight; their business is to pour down and not to taste; and it's so much the better for them: their pleasure is so much the more plentiful and nearer at hand. Secondly, to drink, after the French fashion, but at two meals, and then very moderately, is to be too sparing of the favors of the god. There is more time and constancy required than so. The ancients spent whole nights in this exercise, and ofttimes added the day following to eke it out, and therefore we are to take greater liberty and stick closer to our work. I have seen a great lord of my time, a man of high enterprise and famous success, that without setting himself to't, and after his ordinary rate of drinking at meals, drank not much less than five quarts of wine, and at his going away appeared but too wise and discreet, to the detriment of our affairs. The pleasure we hold in esteem for the course of our lives ought to have a greater share of our time dedicated to it; we should, like shopboys and laborers, refuse no occasion nor omit any opportunity of drinking, and always have it in our minds. Methinks we every day abridge and curtail the use of wine, and that the after breakfasts, dinner snatches, and collations I used to see in my father's house, when I was a boy, were more usual and frequent then than now.

Is it that we pretend to a reformation? Truly, no: but it may be we are more addicted to Venus than our fathers were. They are two exercises that

thwart and hinder one another in their vigor. Lechery weakens our stomach on the one side; and on the other sobriety renders us more spruce and amorous for the exercise of love.

'Tis wonderful what strange stories I have heard my father tell of the chastity of that age wherein he lived. It was for him to say it, being both by art and nature cut out and finished for the service of ladies. He spoke well and little: ever mixing his language with some illustration out of authors most in use, especially in Spanish, and among the Spanish he whom they called Marcus Aurelius was ordinarily in his mouth. His behavior was gently grave, humble, and very modest; he was very solicitous of neatness and propriety both in his person and clothes, whether on horseback or afoot: he was monstrously punctual in his word; and of a conscience and religion generally tending rather towards superstition than otherwise. For a man of little stature, very strong, well proportioned, and well knit; of a pleasing countenance, inclining to brown, and very adroit in all noble exercises. I have seen also canes charged with lead, with which they say he exercised his arms for throwing the bar or the stone, or in fencing; and shoes with leaden soles to make him lighter for running or leaping. Of his vaulting he has left little miracles behind him: I have seen him when past three score laugh at our exercises, and throw himself in his furred gown into the saddle, make the tour of a table upon his thumbs, and scarce ever mount the stairs into his chamber without taking three or four steps at a time. But as to what I was speaking of before, he said there was scarce one woman of quality of ill fame in a whole province: he would tell of strange confidences, and some of them his own, with virtuous women, free from any manner of suspicion of ill, and for his own part solemnly swore he was a virgin at his marriage; and yet it was after a long practice of arms beyond the mountains, of which wars he left us a journal under his own hand, wherein he has given a precise account from point to point of all passages, both relating to the public and to himself. And he was, moreover married at a well advanced maturity, in the year 1528, the three-and-thirtieth year of his age, upon his way home from Italy. Let us return to our bottles.

The incommodities of old age, that stand in need of some refreshment and support, might with reason beget in me a desire of this faculty, it being as it were the last pleasure the course of years deprives us of. The natural heat, say the good-fellows, first seats itself in the feet: that concerns infancy; thence it mounts into the middle region, where it makes a long

abode and produces, in my opinion, the sole true pleasures of human life; all other pleasures in comparison sleep; towards the end, like a vapor that still mounts upward, it arrives at the throat, where it makes its final residence, and concludes the progress. I do not, nevertheless, understand how a man can extend the pleasure of drinking beyond thirst, and forge in his imagination an appetite artificial and against nature; my stomach would not proceed so far; it has enough to do to deal with what it takes in for its necessity. My constitution is not to care for drink but as following eating and washing down my meat, and for that reason my last draught is always the greatest. And seeing that in old age we have our palate furred with phlegms or depraved by some other ill constitution, the wine tastes better to us as the pores are cleaner washed and laid more open. At least, I seldom taste the first glass well. Anacharsis wondered that the Greeks drank in greater glasses towards the end of a meal than at the beginning; which was, I suppose, for the same reason the Germans do the same, who then begin the battle of drink.

Plato forbids children wine till eighteen years of age, and to get drunk till forty; but, after forty, gives them leave to please themselves, and to mix a little liberally in their feasts the influence of Dionysos, that good deity who restores to younger men their gaiety and to old men their youth; who mollifies the passions of the soul, as iron is softened by fire; and in his Laws allows such merry meetings, provided they have a discreet chief to govern and keep them in order, as good and of great utility; drunkenness being, he says, a true and certain trial of every one’s nature, and, withal, fit to inspire old men with mettle to divert themselves in dancing and music; things of great use, and that they dare not attempt when sober. He, moreover, says that wine is able to supply the soul with temperance and the body with health. Nevertheless, these restrictions, in part borrowed from the Carthaginians, please him: that men forbear excesses in the expeditions of war; that every judge and magistrate abstain from it when about the administrations of his place or the consultations of the public affairs; that the day is not to be employed with it, that being a time due to other occupations, nor the night on which a man intends to get children.

’Tis said that the philosopher Stilpo, when oppressed with age, purposely hastened his end by drinking pure wine. The same thing, but not designed by him, despatched also the philosopher Arcesilaus.

But ’tis an old and pleasant question, whether the soul of a wise man can be overcome by the strength of wine?—

“Si munitae adhibet vim sapientiae.”

To what vanity does the good opinion we have of ourselves push us? The most regular and most perfect soul in the world has but too much to do to keep itself upright, and from being overthrown by its own weakness. There is not one of a thousand that is right and settled so much as one minute in a whole life, and that may not very well doubt, whether according to her natural condition she ever can be; but to join constancy to it is her utmost perfection; I mean when nothing should jostle and discompose her, which a thousand accidents may do. ’Tis to much purpose that the great poet Lucretius keeps such a clatter with his philosophy, when, behold! he goes mad with a love philtre. Is it to be imagined that an apoplexy will not stun Socrates as well as a porter? Some men have forgotten their own names by the violence of a disease; and a slight wound has turned the judgment of others topsy-turvy. Let him be as wise as he will, after all he is but a man; and than that what is there more frail, more miserable, or more nothing? Wisdom does not force our natural dispositions:—

> *“Sweat and paleness come over the whole body, the tongue is rendered powerless, the voice dies away, the eyes are darkened, there is ringing in the ears, the limbs sink under us by the influence of fear:”*

he must shut his eyes against the blow that threatens him; he must tremble upon the margin of a precipice, like a child; nature having reserved these light marks of her authority, not to be forced by our reason and the stoic virtue, to teach man his mortality and our weakness; he turns pale with fear, red with shame, and groans with the colic, if not with desperate outcry, at least with hoarse and broken voice:—

> *“Let him not think anything foreign to him which is incidental to men in general.”*

The poets, that feign all things at pleasure, dare not acquit their greatest heroes of tears:—

> *“Thus he speaks, weeping, and then sets sail with his fleet.”*

’Tis sufficient for a man to curb and moderate his inclinations, for totally to suppress them is not in him to do. Even our great Plutarch, that excellent and perfect judge of human actions, when he sees Brutus and Torquatus kill their children, begins to doubt whether virtue could proceed so far, and to question whether these persons had not rather been stimulated

by some other passion. All actions exceeding the ordinary bounds are liable to sinister interpretation, forasmuch as our liking no more holds with what is above than with what is below it.

Let us leave that other sect, that sets up an express profession of scornful superiority: but when even in that sect, reputed the most quiet and gentle, we hear these rhodomontades of Metrodorus:—

> *"Fortune, I have got the better of thee, and have made all the avenues so sure thou canst not come at me;"*

when Anaxarchus, by command of Nicocreon the tyrant of Cyprus, was put into a stone mortar, and laid upon with mauls of iron, ceases not to say, "Strike, batter, break; 'tis not Anaxarchus, 'tis but his sheath that you pound and bray so;" when we hear our martyrs cry out to the tyrant from the middle of the flame, "This side is roasted enough, fall to and eat, it is enough done; fall to work with the other;" when we hear the child in Josephus torn piece-meal with pincers, defying Antiochus, and crying out with a constant and assured voice: "Tyrant, thou losest thy labor, I am still at ease; where is the pain, where are the torments with which thou didst so threaten me? Is this all thou canst do? My constancy torments thee more than thy cruelty does me. O pitiful coward, thou faintest, and I grow stronger; make me complain, make me bend, make me yield if thou canst; encourage thy guards, cheer up thy executioners; see, see they faint, and can do no more; arm them, flesh them anew, spur them up;" truly, a man must confess that there is some frenzy, some fury, how holy soever, that at that time possesses those souls. When we come to these Stoical sallies: "I had rather be mad than voluptuous," a saying of Antisthenes?

When Sextius tells us, "he had rather be fettered with affliction than pleasure:" when Epicurus takes upon him to play with his gout, and, refusing health and ease, defies all torments, and despising the lesser pains, as disdaining to contend with them, he covets and calls out for others sharper, more violent, and more worthy of him:

> *"And instead of timid beasts, wishes the foaming boar or tawny lion would come from the mountain:"*

who but must conclude that these are wild sallies pushed on by a courage that has broken loose from its place? Our soul cannot from her own seat reach so high; 'tis necessary she must leave it, raise herself up, and, taking the bridle in her teeth, transport her man so far that he shall afterwards himself be astonished at what he has done; as, in war, the heat of

battle impels generous soldiers to perform things of so infinite danger, as afterwards, recollecting them, they themselves are the first to wonder at; as it also fares with the poets, who are often rapt with admiration of their own writings, and know not where again to find the track through which they performed so fine a career; which also is in them called fury and rapture. And as Plato says, ’tis to no purpose for a sober-minded man to knock at the door of poesy: so Aristotle says, that no excellent soul is exempt from a mixture of madness; and he has reason to call all transports, how commendable soever, that surpass our own judgment and understanding, madness; forasmuch as wisdom is a regular government of the soul, which is carried on with measure and proportion, and for which she is to herself responsible. Plato argues thus, that the faculty of prophesying is so far above us, that we must be out of ourselves when we meddle with it, and our prudence must either be obstructed by sleep or sickness, or lifted from her place by some celestial rapture.

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